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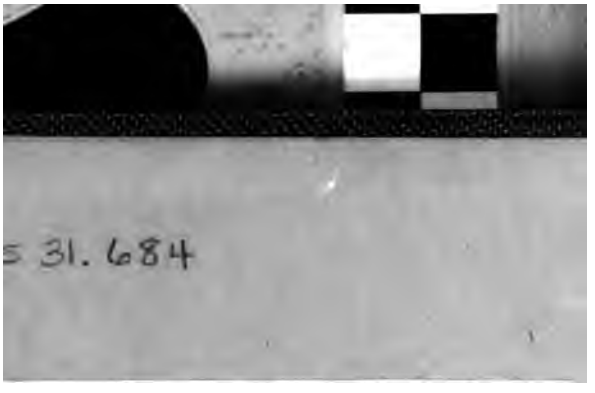
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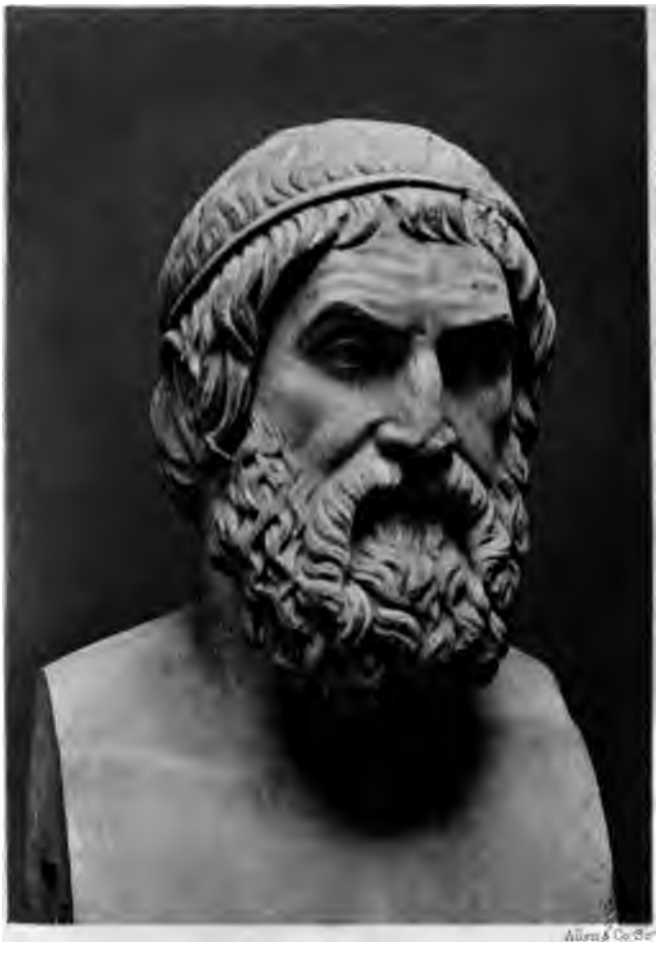
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SOPHOCLES.







SOPHOCLES

TRANSLATED AND EXPLAINED BY

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

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PREFACE

"*If, because of the immense fame of the following Tragedy, I wished to acquaint myself with it, and could only do so by the help of a translator, I should require him to be literal at every cost save that of absolute violence to our language. . . . I would be tolerant for once—in the case of so immensely famous an original—of even a clumsy attempt to furnish me with the very turn of each phrase in as Greek a fashion as English will bear.*"—BROWNING: Preface to the translation of Agamemnon.

"*Car . . . une méthode, seule, existe, honnête et logique, de traduction: la littéralité impersonnelle à peine atténuée pour juste le rapide pli de paupière et savourer longuement. . . . Elle produit, suggestive, la plus grande puissance littéraire. Elle fait le plaisir évocatoire. Elle recrée en indiquant. Elle est le plus sûr garant de vérité. Elle plonge, ferme, en sa nudité de pierre. Elle fleure l'arome primitif et le cristallise. Elle dévide et délie. . . . Elle fixe. Certes si la littéralité enchaine l'esprit divaguant et le dompte, elle arrête l'infernale facilité de la plume.*"—Un mot du traducteur à ses amis, J. C. MARDRUS. Preface to the Arabian Nights.

I HAVE prefixed as the phylactery of this book these two quotations; but there are one or two other matters of which the reader (or he that keeps the reader's conscience) may expect that some account be given. Firstly,



why rhymed couplets instead of the traditional blank verse?

I will not cite Dryden in defence of the rhymed couplet for dramatic verse, because I might be answered with Dryden's recantation. The great difficulty of English blank verse might be excuse enough; but if a translator meekly confesses, "*I cannot write blank verse*," the critic, unappeased, may retort, "*Then don't translate Sophocles!*"

But in truth I hold that the rhymed and not the blank verse is nearer the Sophoclean pitch of language. Sophocles moves, by predilection, in the middle diction, which is common ground to the poetical and the prose style; his dialogue is colloquially plain and direct; in *King Œdipus* especially his vocabulary resembles that which Antiphon employed in prose to plead his cases, real or imaginary. Now English blank verse must (to my thinking) be always in full dress if it is to succeed—perpetually sonorous, balanced, aloof from the ordinary. True, Byron's noble dramatic verse is unrhymed, but too rhetorical for Sophocles, who is (with rare exceptions) notably pure from rhetoric. Wordsworth tried to abolish the distinction between verse and prose; we may bless him for easing poetical diction, but most of his blank verse might conveniently be printed as prose.

The rhymed couplet gives a perpetual reservation within which to approximate, as near as may be, to prose. With Chaucer, Dryden, Pope, Keats, Shelley, and the Victorians before us, what bounds can we set to the aptitude of this metre? The eighteenth century had tied it up in antithetical, epigrammatic bondage, but a hundred years of reaction have freed it again. So Ovid killed the elegiac couplet in Latin for all purposes but wit; only, in Latin, no poet arose to revive it. Between the dry, tense brilliance of Pope's couplet and the moribund wateriness of William Morris' archaistic rhyming, there is room for ease or elevation, flow or retort, argument and narrative, music and cleverness; the couplet is capable of all the grandeur of blank verse, and yet through all colloquialism of diction or construction the rhyme is present to reassure the ear. Perhaps to confess an ambition is only to offer an estimate of one's own failure; however, I will confess that I have often coveted the joyous brilliancy and unembarrassed current of Rostand's dramatic verse; and I still believe that, given our five foot couplet for the French Alexandrine, a like success is feasible in English, though sadly far from realised in these pages.

Next, the matter of Choruses. The late Mr. Warr in his companion volume of



Aeschylus adopted the device of "rhythmical prose." Perhaps it is foolhardy to attempt more. But I felt that my rhymed couplets prohibited me from leaving the choruses to prose even "rhythmical"; and, I confess, was not content with giving the lyrics of Sophocles the air of an irresponsible canticle modelled on some jingle from *Hymns Ancient and Modern* interpolated in the midst of dramatic action.

"*Changing passions, and numbers changing with those passions, make the whole secret of Western as well as Eastern poetry*," says Goldsmith's ingenious Chinaman. And if the words were married by the poet to a rhythm dochmiac, logaœdic, glyconic, anapæstic, as the case may be, surely (in obedience to the text on my phylactery) the translator's task must be to produce such words as might conveniently be chanted to the poet's music (if by some divine accident the sands of Egypt should ever restore it), or to a modern music which should observe the same rhythm. It would be idle to hope that my choruses will afford the reader a pleasure bearing any tolerable proportion to the extreme labour spent upon them; but I felt myself in honesty bound to hazard this system for representing (to such a reader as Browning imagines) what kind of thing a Sophoclean chorus is. I need not

weary him by explaining the various treatments I have experimented upon in the metrical *pauses* or *rests* which make the Greek cadence, especially in the penultimate of the lyric *period.*

I have sometimes taken the licence to rhyme across from *Turn* (strophe) to *Counter-turn* (antistrophe), but after *King Œdipus* this plan has been abandoned.

Lastly, obligations. A naturally thievish memory has forbidden me to look at other verse translations of my author; but by the high value of his critical contributions to Sophoclean study, I can judge how great is my loss in the case of Mr. Whitelaw's version. I owe it to Sir Richard Jebb that so little commentary is needed to this volume; and what little there is, is in great measure a debt to him also. His great edition is so complete and judicious that for many years to come all Sophoclean criticism must be expressed in terms of differing or agreeing with him. I have only departed from his view in three or four passages; and having his translation perforce before me, where it offered the one right word to render the Greek or to suit the metre, I have not avoided the sin of plagiarism; but I hope my loans will not be judged excessive in this particular.



But (as in sermons) even "lastly" is not the end: there is one matter more.

Goldsmith's ingenious Chinaman—to quote him once again—is demonstrated by the English writer of Eastern Tales to be no Chinaman at all, and to "have nothing of the true Eastern manner in his delivery." The Orientalist then proceeds to detail the ingredients of the "true manner," and among them boasts, "I have used *thee* and *thou* upon all occasions." So, too, our English classical convention, to the great misappreciation, I believe, of certain Greek authors.

If I am right in my estimate of the pitch of Sophocles' manner, then the indiscriminate use of *thee* and *thou* is ruled out by his deliberate approximation to the prose diction of his day; as for the discriminate use, an Age of Progress has unhappily shorn our language of this beautiful resource and given it to the Quakers. There are many verbs quite within the modern poetical range, which become uncouth when they are written in the second person singular, from the general disuse of that inflection. In the lyrics the case stands differently; the *I wot* and *I ween* style of English not unfairly renders the strange convention of dialect and diction which governs the Tragic Chorus; and any extravagance is justified



by the original. "*In no other instance does antiquity appear to me to have played the fool so much as in this sort of choruses, in which eloquence was debased by an excessive affectation of novelty, and in aiming at verbal miracles all grasp of reality was lost.*"

A harsh judgment, and conditioned perhaps by defective texts; yet not the judgment of a flippant schoolboy, but of the great Erasmus.

J. S. P.

GLASGOW, *June* 1902.



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INTRODUCTION

I FIND no literary artist so difficult to seize in exact mental portraiture as Sophocles: Homer himself is hardly more impersonal. We praise the impersonal; coldly, in obedience to critical convention; but the old Adam of curiosity hankers after the autobiographical touch of allusion, the literary egoism which brings our author down into refreshing contact with earth. *Aeschylum laudo, Euripidem lego*, said an English scholar of the eighteenth century. Aeschylus is impersonal in a sense; but I distinguish: Aeschylus is impersonal because he is too big for self-consciousness. Not with the impersonality of Sophocles. You can see the difference most clearly in this: that Aeschylus was an open field for parody, even to a satiric poet who loved and admired him. Aristophanes, nay, a much less skilled hand, could catch the external manner of Aeschylus, so that any one must laugh at the mimicry. You could parody Marlowe, but not Shakespeare: why?



Let me defer the answer for a moment, and go round to another line of approach.

There are few people who make Sophocles their favourite among the Triumvirs of Tragedy, few who can echo M. Arnold—

> *But be his*
> *My special thanks, whose even-balanced soul,*
> *From first youth tested up to extreme old age,*
> *Business could not make dull, nor passion wild;*
> *Who saw life steadily, and saw it whole,*
> *The mellow glory of the Attic stage,*
> *Singer of sweet Colonus, and its child.*

Partly, perhaps, because we love authors no less for their faults than their virtues; we take an easy and satisfying grasp of prominent characteristics. Once familiar with an author, his mannerisms tickle the sense of initiation. Personality fascinates, even expressed in growths which tend towards the extravagant and the grotesque. Self hungers after its own mystery, and seeks for the Self in another communicated by artistic interpretation. And it is the self which eludes us in Sophocles.

But if most moderns (who care, or who are qualified to care, for any of them) prefer Aeschylus or Euripides, the Greeks themselves did not. His unequalled continuity of success on the stage proves the judgment of his

contemporaries; but even more significant for our purposes is the opinion of Greek posterity. I need not remind the reader that Sophocles' practice is repeatedly Aristotle's example of some canon in the formulation of dramatic technique. And he was not the favourite of the critics only. Look at Xenophon's testimony. He makes Socrates ask Aristodemus[1] who are his chief objects of admiration for artistic skill: Aristodemus replies, "*Homer in Epic, Melanippides in Dithyramb, Sophocles in Tragedy, Polycleitus in Statuary, Zeuxis in Painting.*"

It is the judgment of the man in the street —the street of Athens. Just so his modern analogue would answer '*Shakespeare*'; only an exquisite could say '*Marlowe.*' Why?

Now we can answer both questions at once: because he is the artistic embodiment of an age, of a national spirit in a given age, of— to clench it in a comprehensive term — a civilisation. By that word I mean the whole sum of expression of the passions, fancies, reasonings, principles, aspirations of a people. "*A civilisation,*" says a penetrating writer of the school of Taine,[2] "*is a balance of qualities and defects.*"

Again: "*There are five or six categories of*

[1] *Mem. A.*, iv. [2] M. Barrès.

facts or ideas which are the natural framework, and afterwards continue to be the evidences, for any civilisation worthy of the name. They are: language and grammar, religious dogma and worship, literature and fine-art, philosophy and science, social organisation and political institutions." [1]

If one man can give the artistic embodiment of a civilisation, he is the Classic of that time. Those who love him, love the Civilisation which he mirrors; if we are coldly affected towards him, it is because we have not realised his message. If we desiderate personality in him, it is because we have not perceived that his personality is the personality of a people and an age, individualised by the artist. If you try to parody Sophocles—except in the merest verbal accidents in him—you will be parodying the Periclean Age; as in Shakespeare the Elizabethan England.

This is not to say that Sophocles is greater than Aeschylus. I would contest that Milton is not the representative poet of the seventeenth century, though he is its greatest name. Perhaps there are epochs too transitional to admit the representative poet, epochs like the boastful, chaotic century we have just buried,

[1] Taine summarised by Boutmy, *Le Parthénon et le Génie Grec*, Pref. xiv.



which are mere preparatory shufflings, irregular dartings and radiatings which precede a new crystallisation. But even in an organised civilisation the grand eccentric—an Æschylus or a Milton—may be the paramount figure. And it is then we need to redress a mental bias in order to appreciate duly the representative great poet, great without lawlessness, not by the bursting vehemence of prophetic individuality, great and normal.

I believe we might point to an analogy in Painting, but it would detain us too long to elaborate. Modern fancy has turned in the Italian Schools with peculiar admiration to the great Primitives or to the salient personal touch of a Michelangiolo, and declared it humdrum to repeat the praises lavished by the eighteenth century on Raphael. But the eighteenth century was an organic unit, a civilisation in the sense above outlined, and what they saw in Raphael was a perfect artistic embodiment of another civilisation; Raphael *is* the ripeness of the Italian Renaissance, as Sophocles *is* the Periclean Age.

If, then, this is the clue to Sophocles, we must try to form, though only in rough outline, some image of the Periclean Age. Chapters, nay volumes, have been written on it. In short compass I know nothing so rich in penetrative



enthusiasm as E. Boutmy's *Le Parthénon*, &c.; but Beloch has a very telling chapter, highly compressed, but with well-managed emphasis, and calculated to nip certain sentimental exaggerations which forget the background of savagery in Athens of the fifth century.

The note of the time is Harmony. It is the extraordinary harmonious parity of development in every branch of human activity at once. Sparta after the Persian wars surrenders the headship of Greece 'from craven fears of being great': Athens, full of ambition and conscious power, succeeds. The elements which go to make up her position in the middle of the century are, in abstract, these: a sudden, enormous increase of population induced by her liberal policy towards immigration; the intoxicating self-revelation, the awakening of national consciousness, caused by the miraculous achievement of defeating Persia; the vast and sudden affluence of wealth from the tribute and from the expansion of commerce—and this at a time when the purchasing power of money was very high. Athens by position was the meeting point of the Dorian and the Ionian world, and now there was added an extraordinary intermingling of classes, races, and types, stimulating every kind of activity. A community of merchant princes has ever been a hotbed of art;



they abounded at Athens; and the State itself was collectively a merchant prince, like Genoa or Venice or Florence in their great days. The artistic impulse was deep-seated in the Attic nature; the Pisistratids had fostered it, as Tyranny all over Greece fostered it. But now Athens was to prove that abnegation of political activity is not a necessary condition to its development, but that it can be carried to the highest excellence concurrently with the deployment of every other energy of the human character.

She was mistress of Greece for a brief season after the reduction of Boeotia, and though the process of dissolution began within a generation, her spirit was not broken till the Peloponnesian War had run some twenty years.

She was heiress of the science and philosophy of Ionia; she gathered and absorbed the feeble beginnings of literary art which the Dorian put forth in tragedy and comedy; she borrowed the poetry and rhetoric of Sicily; she borrowed the sculpture and architecture of her Western neighbours. And all that she borrowed she raised to a new power. Of the sturdy, heavy Doric order of building she made a Parthenon; from the stiff Argive and Aeginetan schools in sculpture she evolved a Phidias. It was reserved for her to actualise the possible graces



of every form in which man strives to touch the idea of Beauty.

And at the same time every individual citizen of Athens was a τύραννος, despot over half the Greek world in military dominion, and τύραννος in that for his pride and enjoyment the greatest masters of Poetry, Sculpture, Architecture, Oratory brought their emulous tribute. The Periclean State Socialism paid him a living wage for condescending to perform his duties; a vast mass of slaves lay crushed to consolidate the foundations of his magnificence.

He was never long enough at peace to become hebetated; the glory of Athens began in war and bloomed through war. Ruskin's splendid denial that Peace is a nurse of arts is exemplified in the Greek States. Look at the barren record of communities which like Argos stood aloof in long periods of sluggishness! Pericles surveying Athens from his height might have said that never had man individually and collectively lived so full and rich an existence, with such noble scope and equipment for the exercise and satisfaction of every aptitude. And the Athenian listening to his Olympian First Citizen could not but see typified in Pericles the perfect norm of the city's intense and luxuriant being.



I have said that the dissolution of empire began in the same generation which had reared that empire to its extreme height. *Brevis in perfecto mora* is the text of a tragedy in which nations are actors. A number of various confluent forces crystallise into a civilisation; and no sooner is the organic unit perfected than its undoing begins, its elements fly off into new combinations. The unmaking of Athens begins the making of the Hellenistic civilisation.

The spiritual dissolution of the Periclean Age is present no doubt in germ from very early in its formation. But it was late before the worm of rationalism became active in the mass. Greece had been inoculated against scepticism by the religious counter-reformation of beliefs, which we see exemplified in Pindar and Aeschylus. The general conscience of Athens was satisfied with its religion as expressed by the finer spirits. The solvent voices of Anaxagoras, Euripides, Socrates were still only making disciples in the conventicle. And Athens rejected Anaxagoras in spite of Pericles' favour, as she rejected the anti-national influence of Aspasia; Euripides could only get his sceptic cup accepted by copiously sweetening the lip with ironical flattery; Socrates was perhaps only known to his fellow townsmen as a crank and a bore during the time



that he was breeding, in an Alcibiades and a Critias, the revolutions of the future.

The national idea, then, of the day was an active, harmonious enjoyment of the faculties of life. Body and soul were trained *pari passu* in education; citizen and individual—each was at his highest power. The true Periclean is too busy fighting, voting, judging, administering, imbibing daily education from Plastic, Music, Rhetoric, Poetry, enjoying the recollections of glory still fresh, the exercise of capacities of self-realisation not yet staled, to trouble himself while he works at his trade (the trade of citizen added to his individual vocation enjoined by the Solonian law), as to whether this glorious new-perfected instrument of language is not in truth a garment for inconsistency and self-delusion, or the Pantheon in which every phase of his life and thought is ideally symbolised, in truth a degrading and obsolescent fiction.

War favours religious, as Peace favours philosophical, superstition. Perhaps the very war which began the material downfall, helped in its earlier stage to brace and maintain the framework of life which we call the Periclean civilisation. Till the imminent shadow of disaster darkened the bright confidence in herself which had radiated into such a complete circle of



energies, stress and danger made her more resolutely vindicate herself—evince herself, her national soul and mind in the typical life which had been found to express it.

Sophocles was born amid the origins of the Athenian greatness: Marathon was a child's dream to him; the evacuation and destruction of Athens, the victory of Salamis a boy's memory illuminated by his own selection to take a leading part in the thanksgiving festival which followed. And his death falls within a few months of the battle which decided the doom of Athenian supremacy. So his life coincides with the fifth century.

We have none of the works of his youth preserved.

It is a curious fact that of none of the Three Tragedians have we any early work, unless the *Cyclops* of Euripides: perhaps an evidence to the long apprenticeship required in tragic art before even a master genius could produce a masterpiece. *Ars longa.*

Of what survives, the most (and the best) belongs to the period of incipient disintegration in that National Idea which we figure him as symbolising. But he symbolises none the less truly. It has been said that a man's character becomes set when he is between thirty and forty; by then he has digested the conscious and



unconscious influences of his breeding and his studies, and after that his mind is rigid, more apt to react than to receive. But the middle years of Sophocles' life were such years as might well prolong the period of elastic receptivity. He was not yet forty when the fall of Aegina commenced the career of Athens as a great power in Greece proper; he was sixty-five when the Peloponnesian War began. Within this space lies the period he represents. Yet, though he write twenty years later still, he is none the less a true witness to the ideas of the dominant date. Subsequent changes reveal to him objectively the shape of the perfect time they begin to impair. He gives us the spirit of the Periclean world, with something of the analytic judgment of one who sees his ideal all the more clearly by comparison with the new times into which he has outlived. Tennyson to the day of his death is still the man of the fifties, appreciating, judging, partially assimilating—but not incarnating the nineties.

Riches and success contribute not a little perhaps to the making of such a typical person. The struggling, discontented contemporary is thrown forward to anticipate. Sophocles and Euripides are well-nigh coevals, but the unsuccessful 'greengrocer's son' is intellectually and spiritually generations ahead of



the rich, leisured son of Sophillus the merchant, who liked his times and was liked by them. Perhaps no one but a man of the rich, cultivated mercantile class was so fit to be the literary voice of the commercial aristocracy, which made the earlier party of Pericles, and which he used to enfranchise the full democracy that succeeded it. It is the same class to which Herodotus belongs in Ionia; the same which afterwards produced Lysias (most Philistine of Classics) and Plato. Easy circumstances allowed the development of the artistic instincts natural in the race; and travel, confined in those days to the purposes of war or commerce, brought an enormous influence into the thought of the time. There is a vivid passage in De Quincey's Essay on Style (p. 174) which depicts the importance of the travelling philosopher in filling the hungry mind of his generation: philosopher, I call him, not as being one who tries to fit all experience into the four corners of a system, but in the Greek sense of one who indulges a methodical curiosity. The acquaintance between Sophocles and Herodotus is attested; and were it not, the resemblances of doctrine and diction are too signal to be dismissed as accident.

When Aristophanes recalls regretfully the



'good old times,' the feature he most accentuates is the highly developed union of religion and patriotism: patriotism exhibited in the policy of Cimon, and religion displayed in the brilliant multitude of festivals. Aristophanes hated nothing in Pericles except his policy: Pericles embodied the old Attic dignity and completeness which departed with the revolution in dress (change from the flowing Ionian purple) and with the campaign waged by democrats against the equestrian, gymnastic, and musical departments of education.[1] The breakers-up of Attic religion took two lines—common perhaps to all democratic parties—one attacked the supernatural, another sought to abolish the joviality. Each undoes the universality of the religion. The moral, emotional, and æsthetic appeals are harmonious in the religion that Sophocles typifies.

Concerning Sophocles' life and character there was plenty of ancient material to hand, some of it deriving from a nearly contemporary source in Ion of Chios. Schneidewin collects the authorities who successively passed down the rolling snowball of anecdotal reminiscence and invention. We do not gather much that is of value in estimating the man. On two points there is agreement of evidence: the sweetness

[1] Aristoph. *Eq. Nubes*, &c., and Old Oligarch.



of his character, and the voluptuousness of his nature. "Figurative and sensuous, as all great thinkers must be," are the admirable words of De Quincey; and the vehement and disorderly passions may be instanced in almost all the greatest poets from Dante to Byron. "Serene in life and after life serene," are the words in Aristophanes which explain his freedom from literary jealousies. But if we apply them to his passions also, we must think of a strong fire which burns clear at last.

Asceticism is not Attic; if Greek at all, it is, as in Pythagoras and Plato, the intellectual or semi-political reaction in a decadence.

Neither is acrimony in character with the Attic of Pericles' day; it is for disappointed men and futile times: outside a Sophoclean calmness and content, there was room for Olympian passion or gravity of denunciation, and for hatred rioting in the furious mirth of comedy; but the Euripidean carping satire and critical disapprobation is not the Periclean spirit, but rebellion against it in the interests of coming Pan-Hellenism and cosmopolitanism.

II

With the common instinct to materialise the ideal conception of beauty in a form, every artist must unite a peculiar sense of the natural



beauty inherent in a particular form. The sculptor must be specially sensitive to the glory of marble, even in the block, unhewn —as Michelangiolo used to go and wonder at the masses in the quarries, and imagined the figures to be awakened out of them. A goldsmith must love the metal as such. A poet must love speech, must feel the glory of words, even before the thought they are to incarnate is consciously present in his brain. And he must have a peculiar perception of the beauty and power of some given literary genus—epic, tragedy, comedy, lyric. He must regard that form as something capable of a definite perfection—to which, if not already attained, he must advance it, or in which, if already subsistent, he must exercise it: no artist can accept progress *εἰς ἄπειρον*. Beyond a certain thing organically complete, which he sees or foresees, there lies not progress, but dissolution; the dissolution is the formation beginning of something else. Euripides is the beginning of a New Tragedy, but he is the decadence of the essentially Attic Tragedy—not from defect of genius (it may be maintained that he is greater than Sophocles), but from defect of harmony between genius and the contemporary form. Such perfect form is always a combination

of elements, each limited in proportion—a balance of tendencies. So soon as one element, one tendency, acquires predominant force, the compromise is at an end, the form begins to dissolve.

Attic Tragedy was such a compromise between the *genera* which we classify as Morality, Opera, Drama, perhaps Figure Dancing, Mummery, and Tableaux — all shaped with a religious intention.

The evolution of Tragedy is a most singular piece of literary history. It begins purely choric: the performance of the goat-singers, the satyr-troupe of Dionysus. It is a κῶμος, a musical revel; only performed on some sort of primitive stage in the fields, a religious *Te Deum* sung by the peasants in the enthusiasm of thankfulness for the ingathering of the vintage. This choral hymn could no more resist the influence of the Greek genius for a story, than the original Hymn had refused to transform itself into the narrative Epic. The Greek has the passion for a story as the Oriental has it: myth, fable, saga feed a perpetual craving in his mind for a story. Kinglake believed that the Tale of Tales, The Thousand and One Nights, came from Greek invention. Fertile wits soon grew luxuriant crops of legend about Dionysus.



And any episode in his adventures was enough. The leader of the chorus chanted a tale of some suffering or triumph of the god in the undying popular jingle metre which afterwards was the vehicle of Roman soldiers' songs and of the early plebeian Christian hymns —the trochaic tetrameter. The eighteenth poem of Bacchylides, the *Aegeus*, is a missing link recovered in the chain of evolution from choric to dramatic: it is a dramatic lyric, dialogue in lyrics between king and chorus. It shows us a moment before the parting of the ways which led to Dithyramb and to Drama. When the serene and tender Ionian discovered the metre which of all others most approached a plain-measured prose, the iambic, another step is taken. The musical and the declaimed parts of the composition fall more distinctly apart; it is a fresh encroachment of the growing dramatic element at the expense of the original choric. In the earliest surviving play of Aeschylus the chorus still predominates. But later either he divined or Sophocles taught him to see what modification was necessary to make the obsolescent form fit the newer taste. And Aeschylus, in the Trilogy, indulges his lyrical genius freely indeed, but as an outside setting to a core of action, within which the amount of pure chorus ode



(not counting lyrical dialogue, as in *Choephori*) is very small. This core of action stands out so distinctly, that we may regard everything in *Agamemnon* before the king's entry, everything in *Choephori* before Orestes' appearance, everything in *Eumenides* before the change of scene to Athens, as falling without the drama proper, and not governed by the Unities which are absolute within that limit: in fact it serves the purpose of a prologue. It is, you may say, the Old Tragedy carrying the New in its arms, as the old moon carries the new.

It must have been evident early in the fifth century that Tragedy, being from its origin a thing of heterogeneous elements, must find its perfection in the proportional adjustment of these elements. Sophocles achieved the harmony. He had to strike the same balance that the architects and sculptors struck between archaic severity and too facile ποικιλία, between the hieratic convention and the imitative realism. His work was to prevent the consecrated convention from being glaringly in discord with the change of taste, to adjust the convention with the claims of the *probable* as a new canon of art. He would say to himself, "Here is Attic Tragedy, the note of which is a blending of lyric and prose dramatic: what is the greatest excellence of which this literary kind admits?



How can I reconcile the play of figures in high relief with figures in low relief, persons fully individualised and a chorus of hardly characterised types? What is the form into which (as Aristotle was to say later) this *means* to *tends* to determine?"

Euripides could not solve the problem; he felt himself pinched by the Attic convention; he worked for the dissolution of the form. He could not dispense with the chorus, but he could leave it in obedience to convention without any palliation of its superfluity to the ideal towards which he tended—the pure spoken drama of the New Comedy.

III

We must never forget—De Quincey reminds us of it—that to talk of a *Greek Play* is usually a dangerous misnomer. We invite misconception by speaking of the Ecclêsia as an Athenian Parliament, the Stratêgoi as an Athenian Ministry; and just so if by a Play we understand all that the word has come to denote and connote through ages of usage and modification, then we are describing a parent form in terms of a single developed and specialised offspring. "Greek opera" would be incomplete, but still less misleading, as a description of the



spectacular dramatic composition of Music and Poetry which Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides wrote and scored and staged. The narrative genius of the race had first entered to transmute the old rustic miracle-chorus into an inchoate drama; sophistic and rhetoric were next to pour in transforming influences so strong that after a brief, perfect handling the mould broke. The flood of speculation was let loose. Curiosity pried into religion, morals, politics. And the drama to live in favour must make itself the plastic representation of the public thought and interest. The Sophists were professional educators, and as such professional psychologists: on the old gnômê of ΓΝΩΘΙ CAUTON had been reared a fabric of character analysis, investigation of motives, calculations how the human mind will be affected by circumstances, by interaction with fellow minds; into what types the human mind may be classified. Rhetoric, strictly the rhetoric of the law courts, gives perhaps the first impulse to a study of plot, the first interest in the riddle, "How will a given situation of persons end?" "What must eventually come out concerning *x* to account for this and that behaviour, this and that mysterious happening?" I cannot put it better than in the words of the excellent French critic, who says:—



"L'époque à laquelle appartient Thucydide est celle ou l'étude méthodique de la psychologie se forme et se développe. Le théâtre attique, à partir de Sophocle, vit d'analyse psychologique. La rhétorique judiciaire, avec sa perpétuelle recherche du vraisemblable (*τὰ εἰκότα*) c'est-à-dire notamment des motifs qui avaient pu porter un prévenu à faire ou à ne pas faire l'action dont il était accusé creusait sans cesse ces problèmes de l'âme. Les sophistes proprement dits s'y complaisaient. Le mythe d'Hercule entre le vice et la vertu, raconté par Prodicus, était une étude psychologique; l'éloge d'Hélène attribué à Gorgias est rempli de thèses psychologiques et morales; les fragments d'Antiphon le sophiste sont de même nature."—A. Croiset, *Notice sur Thucydide.*

The age required more actuality, to put it in a single word: the Aeschylean tragedy moved too much in an empyrean of its own, alien in scale and diction. There are words of Sophocles chronicled in Plutarch [1] which are full of information, uncertain though the text is:—

Ὁ Σοφοκλῆς ἔλεγε, τὸν Αἰσχύλου διαπεπαιχὼς ὄγκον, εἶτα τὸ πικρὸν καὶ κατάτεχνον τῆς ἀυτοῦ κατασκευῆς, τρίτον ἤδη τὸ τῆς λέξεως μεταβάλλειν εἶδος· ὅπερ ἐστὶν ἠθικώτατον καὶ βέλτιστον.

"Sophocles used to say that he had bantered

[1] *Mor.*, p. 79 B.

away (?) the pomp of Aeschylus; secondly, that he had modified (?) the harshness and artificiality of his arrangement (? *or* staging); thirdly and lastly, he altered the type of diction—which in him (S.) is admirably full of character."

Now here compare Boutmy:[1]—

"The Greeks were the first to discover that beauty is the most determinate thing in the world; that one may seek it in vain, after the fashion of Oriental art, in the enormous, the indefinite, and the monstrous (with which our æsthetic depravity tends again to confound it); it is made of order, measure, adjustment; in architecture it is realised under three conditions—unity in the significance or function of each organ, unity in the end proposed by the sum of the work, convergence in the effect of the several details."

We may judge Sophocles in terms of this canon. Once at least he rose to a full realisation of it, in the work which all posterity has hailed as his masterpiece—*Œdipus Rex.*

His first great change was to reduce the unit of composition to a more manageable scope, substituting the single play for the Trilogy. It is a testimony to the extraordinary grandeur of Aeschylus' genius that the Trilogy

[1] Pref. xxxiv.



should be the form in which it naturally moved and found its free play. In a Trilogy all the effects must be gigantic: characters in huge outline displaying the great primary passions and beliefs in a simple sequence; some great cardinal event in mythology or history, staged in a literary form built up of blocks and masses of poetry. The convention stood far aloof from reality and probability, and Aeschylus gloried in it. His improvements in scenic trappings and fittings were designed to enhance the splendour of the spectacle, to make the ocular appeal suit the verbal appeal of his magnificent diction. Sophocles developed this line of improvement with a different purpose: he felt that poverty of scenic furniture was a part of the difficulty with which he was to struggle—the alienation of tragedy from reality. We allow for the conventions of every art, but the art perishes if the conventions are felt to be ridiculous. The "*This lantern doth the hornèd moon present*" style of staging was one stumbling-block the more to the ordinary citizen (whose verdict he sought to gain, mind you: no writing for a *succès d'estime*), who could not make himself at home in the older Tragedy, could not raise and sustain the proper emotions to such a height of aloofness from reality and



probability. Therefore Sophocles welcomed the aid to illusion which he found in the newly-discovered resource of perspective scene-painting; he accepted the Aeschylean embellishments in dress, &c., modifying them with a view to the life-like rather than the pictorially and plastically splendid. The difference between his and Euripides' handling of these means, is that Euripides makes straight for pure realism, Sophocles for so much realism as will reconcile his public to the convention which required a tragedy to be a dignified tableau, without abandoning the convention. He reduced the pomp, then, and also the harsh and artificial elements in the workmanship of Aeschylus; but, thirdly, comes the most important of all, "he altered the style of diction."

This is the point of view from which we must make our fullest survey of Sophocles: he is essentially the artist in words.

I have alluded to the sophist influence. With the sophists begins the study of style as a craft, the study of grammar as a specified art. Rhetoric is the Greek for style. The first philologists are Gorgias and his contemporaries. Self-conscious use of language is visible in the solemn puns which surprise us in Pindar and Aeschylus. But the next generation begins to play with language

analytically. The delight in words for their own sake, their individual sonorousness, their balances and correspondences in formal composition, all the self-conscious craftsmanship in language, is developed by the early school of rhetorical sophists. The Athenians delighted in the full, rounded, leisurely manner of the early prose; as such style always charms till the secret of it is discovered, and "all can raise the flower now, for all have got the seed." The intellect apprehends the meaning long before the ear has done with the pleasure of taking in the elaborate volume of the phrase. You see it in Gorgias, in Thucydides' highly worked-up passages, rather more rudely in the Old Oligarch, and nauseously imitated in Atticist rhetoricians. It is language striking conscious poses, turning round to admire itself —like the Ovidian versification, *nimium amator ingenii sui.* Presently it caused a reaction towards the dry brevity of Lysias. Sophocles is much too fine an artist to be content with a style whose beauties can be formulated, laid down in a rule for reproduction when required. With him, as with Plato (and it is only true of the very greatest stylists), *ars est celare artem.*

It has been shown that the effects in the architecture of the Parthenon are partly derived from following a very subtle rule of thumb



instead of exact measurement, slight modifications of the mathematically exact. Herein lay the difference between Attic architects and Roman imitators; herein Ruskin taught the difference between genuine Gothic and Sir Gilbert Scott. So in Sophocles it is comparatively rare to find a sentence formally balanced in exact antithetical style. His art is to be never posing, and yet never slipshod; never on parade, yet always keeping a natural ease of carriage. He differs from Aeschylus and from Euripides in his handling of iambic metre. And the divergence between his earliest and his latest work is notably small. It was many years before he realised the ideal of tragedy which he had set up within himself. *Œdipus up at Colonos* is a work of his old age. But taking any ordinary base of calculation—incidence of *caesura*, position of long words in the line—there is the closest similarity between *Ajax* and *Œdipus Coloneus*, though written perhaps at some forty years' interval. The sweetness, smoothness, and ease are the same. But there are differences. In his earliest work he is not free from the Aeschylean tendency to make the individual line a unit in construction: which contributes to the alienation of the dramatic diction from the common spoken diction. Sophocles does not set up ranges of colossal

statues in word, but must always be adjusting the figure to its precise value in the group, and the group to its function in the edifice. From this splendid Aeschylean intemperance he gradually frees himself, cautiously and with extreme tact drawing the poetical style nearer the conversational, and so assisting in the illusion of reality. The most salient example is the use of elision at the end of the sixth foot, which carries the line into the next without pause (*Œdipus Rex*, 29, and examples there cited). This was known as εἶδος Σοφόκλειον.[1] But without this metrical licence you can see in *Œdipus Coloneus*, 495, 577, 737, 1311, the way in which he adapts his line to be spoken and not declaimed. To be classed with this is his change of vocabulary: in *Ajax* (partly because the Epic subject invited it) the diction is coloured with Epic words and phrases; in *Œdipus Rex* it approximates closely to the vocabulary of Antiphon in prose. He makes no revolution like Euripides with the introduction

[1] "One source of feebleness in this passage, and it is one of frequent occurrence in all Lord Byron's plays, is his practice of ending his lines with insignificant monosyllables. *Of, to, and, till, but, from*, all concur in the course of a very few pages. . . . A more inharmonious system of versification, or one more necessarily tending to weight and feebleness, could hardly have been invented."—Heber (on *Marino Faliero*, Act v. sc. 1). Doubtless there were episcopally minded critics who rebuked Sophocles in like terms!



of those undignified diminutives which shocked an old-fashioned ear like slang. He is never prosaic, in the bad sense; he moves normally in the diction common to poetry and prose—like Coleridge, who refused to differentiate the two styles. And in chorus, Sophocles, and Sophocles alone, achieved the seemingly impossible compromise of making the odes rich with poetry and at the same time perfectly germane to the play. Euripides failed doubly in the attempt; his chorus degenerates in function into mere musical interlude, and sometimes in essence under the wrappings of sonorous Doric *glôsses* the thought is a mere commonplace—for example, the washerwomen in the first ode of *Hippolytus*. Sophocles' equality of style was gained by taking in much from pure common speech; Euripides' cynicism led him into wanton bathos, the more trenchantly seen by contrast with his abuse of the ultra-poetic jargon.

IV

My design was to draw some sort of sketch of the times, with their thought and character, their form of art, their attitude toward literature and drama; and then to turn round and show Sophocles as representative at each point.



But it has been hard to outline the position of language and drama as he found it except by comparison with the position as he left them; and so we find ourselves already arrived at the second part of the business without sensible transition.

My purpose in what remains is twofold: to show Sophocles typifying the characteristics we have detected in the Periclean way of thinking; and, secondly, to follow out the close correspondence between thought and manner—that is, the real harmony in virtue of which we rank him as the supremely Attic craftsman in his own art.

First his religious opinions.

It is the essence of Greek religion that it is universal: not a cloud sitting over one department of the mind, but an atmosphere into which the summits of all the various activities rise. They are sensible of deity everywhere.

οὐδὲν τούτων ὅτι μὴ Ζεύς.[1]

The simple, honest Teukros says,[2]

ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν καὶ ταῦτα καὶ τὰ πάντ' ἀεὶ
φάσκοιμ' ἂν ἀνθρώποισι μηχανᾶν θεούς.

Sophoclean though not Sophocles; the

[1] *Trach.*, 1278. [2] *Aj.*, 1037.

Scholiast Didymus remarks, *εἰσὶ γάρ τινες ἑτεροδοξοῦντες*, to wit, Euripides.

Philoctetes in the bitterness of his spirit rails against Providence:[1] Neoptolemus answers with a justification of the ways of God to man.[2] The root and base of all religion is humility, the perception of human futility, of the inadequacy of human reasoning to solve or to satisfy everywhere. Athena herself dictates the moral to the hero whom Sophocles loved,[3] as all Greece loved him, for his virtues and his vices, alike characteristically Greek—Odysseus. See also the Scholiast on *Aj.* 780,

διὰ πάντων δὲ διδάσκει ὅτι κρατεῖ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων ἡ εἱμαρμένη καὶ γνῶναι μέν τὰ ἐσόμενα διὰ τῆς μαντικῆς ἔστιν οὐ μὴν καὶ φυλάξασθαι.

So again in—

ἔτι μέγας ὀυρανῷ[4]
Ζεύς, &c.

And not only the existence of divine law, but its sublimity; compare the *μέγιστα νόμιμα*[5] with the prophet-like strain of the Chorus—

εἴ μοι συνείη φέροντι.[6]

Herodotus had the same perception (see i. 5; i. 91; and up and down his history). It takes various forms: now it is the *orbis quidam rerum*

[1] *Phil.*, 446. [2] *Phil.*, 1315. [3] *Aj.*, 119–133.
[4] *El.*, 174. [5] *El.*, 1094. [6] *O. T.*, 863.



which was Tacitus' reading of the world (i. 207); now the famous sentence which displeased Plutarch—

φθονερὸν καὶ ταραχῶδες τὸ θεῖον.[1]

This shapes itself to Sophocles as an irony in things[2]—

τοὺς εὐγενεῖς γὰρ κἀγαθοὺς, ὦ παῖ, φιλεῖ
Ἄρης ἐναίρειν, &c.

which again reminds us of Tacitus—

Breves et infaustos populi Romani amores.

And yet such is his completeness of soul that along with this deep sense of human futility he delights to think of the power and versatility of man: see the famous chorus in *Antigone*.[3]

The latter part of the Scholiast above quoted has special importance.[4] Sophocles' view of μάντις and μαντική is of particular interest. The supernatural is always favourable ground for rogues and impostors; and facility of imposture is curiously often taken as evidence against probability of truth. So in the fifth century. The vulgar were freely taken in by quack-prophets and oracle-mongers: take the *Knights* for witness. And the cheap rationalist held

[1] i. 32.
[2] *Phil.*, 436, and *Fr.*, 652.
[3] *Ant.*, 332.
[4] *Schol. Aj.*, 780.

the existence or abundance of quacks to prove the falsity of all prediction; as if one should deny the science of medicine because of the blatant, ubiquitous, quack Pill.

We can see evidence up and down Herodotus and Thucydides that upon this question of *μαντική* was concentrated the chief debate concerning the supernatural. Prophets in Euripides share in the hatred with which he pursues the class of heralds and the female sex. What is Sophocles' view? He chooses two characters in his plays for mouthpieces of the unbelieving opinion.

Œdipus stands for the pride of human wit in *Œdipus Rex*. He has guessed the riddle of the Sphinx, he is confident he can detect the mysterious cause of the plague at Thebes: Teiresias is discredited, because the scientific ingenuity of the King reads political intrigue between the lines of his prophecy. Even the chorus "are infected with contempt for *μαντική*"—

> *εἴπερ ἐγὼ μάντις εἰμὶ*
> *καὶ κατὰ γνώμαν ἴδρις,*

"If I may prophesy in virtue of intelligence, for that is the only *μαντική*."

And his own words[1] are, "Why should

[1] *O. T.*, 964.

any one regard the hearth of Pythian divination, or the birds that scream overhead?"—but yet there is a secret uneasiness in the corners of his conscience: a man who has come through such extraordinary fortunes cannot be free from superstition. His vaunted ingenuity suggests that even the apparent failure of the prophecy may be its fulfilment (969). There it is that Jocasta plays Eve to his Adam; she leads him into downright contempt: "The man who takes no account of these things carries his life most easily."[1] Within a few lines the revelation begins which is to confound the conceit of human self-sufficiency in horror. The moral of *Œdipus* is the downfall of *ὕβρις*—not the moral or political *ὕβρις*, but the intellectual. Œdipus a blind beggar, and Jocasta swinging from the beam of her bedchamber, are the testimony to the truth of *μαντική*.

Creon is made to point the same moral in *Antigone*. He exemplifies not only the moral *ὕβρις* (like Agamemnon and Menelaus in *Ajax*), which flouts the sacred claims of burial, but the intellectual, which scoffs at the supernatural. Look at the ironical repetition of the words *μάντις*, *μαντικὸν*, in Creon's dialogue with Teiresias. It is the same [illegible] 'practical

[1] *O. T.*, 982.

mind' of Creon reads imposture and intrigue between the lines of Teiresias' warnings. The death of wife and son teaches him the lesson.

Sophocles has strongly developed the humility which is the bottom of religion—the proud humility; in Aeschylus it is rather a dignified fear—

> τὰ μὲν διδακτὰ μανθάνω, τὰ δ' εὑρετά
> ζητῶ, τὰ δ' ἕτερα παρὰ θεοῖς ᾐτησάμην—[1]

a justification, says Plutarch, who quotes the words from a lost play, of εὐβουλία—precisely the virtue of which Teiresias deplores the lack in Creon; and Creon does not understand his εὐβουλία as a religious virtue, but takes him to allege want of φρόνησις, 'common sense.' ὀρθοβουλία is the attribute of Themis, which contrasts with her αἰπυμητὴς παῖς, Prometheus, in Aeschylus.

Sophocles has a more reasoned mysticism in his religion than Aeschylus, less purely symbolic. His mind is of the *credo quia impossibile* order, as far as is possible for a Greek to be. His dogmatism infuriated the tolerant indifferentism of Plutarch in the famous fragment[2] (*Extra Ecclesiam nulla Salus*) about the Sacraments of Eleusis, "Thrice blessed they among men who see these mysteries

[1] *Fr.*, 731. [2] *Fr.*, 753.

before they enter into Death: they alone have a life beyond, but for all others there is misery beyond." He held a priesthood himself, and was thought to be favoured with supernatural intercourse by Asclepius.

In their whole view of μαντικὴ and the supernatural the Sophists were of two schools: Socrates stood apart from the intellectuals who denied all truth in this sphere, and called them madmen—or rather possessed; δαιμονᾶν is the word. In this matter his opinions, as recorded in the first chapter of the *Memorabilia*, are nearly in agreement with Sophocles. I am not sure he would not have agreed with Sophocles in accepting a supernatural rather than an utilitarian sanction for the moral law. The great contrast between Sophocles and Euripides here is that Sophocles' whole theory is consistent, given a dogmatic premiss; Euripides halts between two opinions—the poet is fighting with the rationalist; he has no creed to satisfy his moral and his æsthetic sense.

Sophocles' doctrine[1] of intercessory prayer would be foolishness to Euripides: it stands on the same humility as fundamental in religion. He holds that by virtue of charity one soul can worship for many: it would be a form of ὕβρις, intellectual self-conceit, to exclude the efficacy

[1] *O. C.*, 497.

of vicarious intercession. εὔνους ψυχή is *Charity*, here and where he asserts [1]—

> "A charitable and righteous-minded soul
> Is more inventive than the subtlest wits."

Under his mysticism we must consider also the superstitious fascination which burial, the ceremonies of burial, exercised over him. We judge him of course by about a twentieth part of his work—a caution necessary to be remembered in all these attempted intuitions of his thought—but it is notable that in three out of the seven plays burial is a leading motive—*Antigone* and *Œdipus Coloneus* and *Ajax*, and present also in a fourth, *Electra*. We think of the translation of Theseus' bones from Scyros by Cimon, and of the bones of Orestes giving victory to Sparta against Tegea.[2] But the grave of Œdipus is to be a pledge of victory to Athens—not that he is an Attic hero. Upon some village legend about Œdipus' tomb Sophocles seems to have fitted the conception that a man guilty of most horrible crimes (not guilty in intention, but not guiltless since his pride and self-sufficiency were the means by which Fate overtook him), but repentant and pardoned by Heaven, becomes sanctified. The Euripidean School would have advocated the

[1] *Fr.*, 98. [2] *Her.*, i. 68.



claims of the 'ninety and nine just persons'—and blasphemed the vengeful gods. So Hippolytus. But in Œdipus there is no blaspheming and reproaching.

'Απόλλων τάδ' ἦν 'Απόλλων,

he cries at the end of *Œdipus Rex*, but there is no

τοιούτῳ θεῷ
τίς ἂν προσεύχοιτ';

he is humble. And in *Œdipus Coloneus* he appears as a person sacred by the protection of Apollo. Aeschylus had softened the doctrine of the implacability of Gods in the reconciliation of *Prometheus Luomenos;* but in a wholly different sense. There it is the suzerainty of Destiny over Zeus and Prometheus which reconciles. Here it is Œdipus repenting, Apollo forgiving; yet repenting is hardly the right word for Œdipus, who firmly maintains that he has done no wilful wrong. He bows to the law; he is as perfect a type of the abnegation of spiritual pride as Paganism admits; and holiness attaches to him, stained as he is, and offending in his physical ghastliness against the Greek adoration of beauty everywhere, manifested whether in form or in spirit—as the selected martyr to the divine law.

If Sophocles is permeated with the sweet

reasonableness which M. Arnold makes the essence of Atticism, it comes up in his style as the 'sweetness and light' which M. Arnold borrowed from Swift to express the quality of Hellenism. He has in fulness the temper for want of which men kill themselves or forswear thinking for fear of its consequences; the temper which digests contradictions and harmonises all things. This temper takes shape in his favourite virtues.

εὐβουλία we have seen is the text of *Antigone*.[1] τὸ φρονεῖν τῆς εὐδαιμονίας πρῶτον (the same φρονεῖν—'to have the light' that Teiresias speaks of in *Œdipus Rex*). εὐβουλία is a special determination of it; the quality which reconciles the conflict of State right and individual right, of duty to human law and duty to divine; or, if you prefer, which prevents their collisions. It is like the later conception of ἐπιεικεία; our own equivalent, the constitutional feeling which supplements the deficiencies of law and curtails its extravagances.

Tolerance is the doctrine eloquently urged by Haemon in *Antigone*, especially in the passage:—

> "Wear not within yourself one single mood,
> One rule and one alone of rectitude." [2]

To the same tune are the praises of *Patience* inculcated by the Trachinian women, with the

[1] *Ant.*, 1350. [2] *Ant.*, 705 and 723.

reflection upon that mutability of things which Sophocles repeatedly handled with fresh graces.[1] We have them again in the mouth of Neoptolemus;[2] and akin also is the patient faith in Providence spoken by Œdipus.[3] These are all virtues which suit well with our conception of Sophocles' temper as a mellow compound of tenderness and right reason. For this note of tenderness or pitifulness there are evidences in plenty: take Deianira for one example.[4]

Sophocles does not call life a disease, but he knows the qualities which make a good patient. Let us return for a moment to the special application of εὐβουλία as the virtue which harmonises the relations of State and Individual. We have seen that the main thought which we may analyse out of *Antigone* is this conflict between rights of Law and the rights of individual Conscience. The problem—to use our mean analytic word: to Sophocles it is not as a problem to be solved, but a marvel among marvels to be recreated in a form of art—the problem, however, seems to have fascinated his attention. Agamemnon, in *Ajax*, formulates State right in naked brutality: τόν τοι τύραννον εὐσεβεῖν οὐ ῥᾴδιον,[5] "A king cannot well be a saint," and shortly after he states the duty of

[1] *Trach.*, 125; *Aj.*, 666. [2] *Phil.*, 192.
[3] *O. C.*, 277 *seq.* [4] *Trach*, 296 and 436. [5] *Ai.*, 1350.

passive obedience.[1] In this play, comparatively crude in workmanship as it is, Agamemnon is a crude type of what the Athenian detested in tyranny. The Creon of *Antigone* is no such stage villain: the beauty of the tragedy partly depends upon this, that he is not a bad man nor a bad king, only wanting in the saving grace of εὐβουλία. Here is his doctrine summarised:—

"You cannot understand a man's heart and temper and wit,[2] until it be proved by familiarity with law and authority. A king must grasp the best counsel; if he keep silence from fear of any man, he is a rogue: nothing so near and dear that it may come between him and public duty." And public duty is the ground of distinction drawn between the funeral honours rendered to Eteocles and the casting-out of Polyneices.

Creon says to Antigone, "Are you not ashamed to differ from public opinion?"[3] Her appeal to the ἄγραπτα κἀσφαλῆ νόμιμα[4] is mere ὕβρις to Creon; as though one should plead conscience to an attorney. Law is absolute, authority infallible: that is his position clearly laid down:[5]

> "What man the State appoints thou shalt obey
> E'en in the least, be't right or t'other way."

It is only patriotism run mad by contamination

[1] *Aj.*, 1352. [2] *Ant.*, 180. [3] *Ant.*, 510.
[4] *Ant.*, 454. [5] *Ant.*, 665.



with a narrower egoism: the patriot is part of Creon's character in all three plays,[1] but we must divest the word of every romantic association, and clothe it in the significances which the term patriot carries when applied by a party newspaper to a party leader.

Neoptolemus says—[2]

πόλις γάρ ἐστι πᾶσα τῶν ἡγουμένων
στρατός τε σύμπας.

It is the fault of their governments when men go wrong. Yet later he yields :—

τῶν γὰρ ἐν τέλει κλύειν
τό τ' εἰδικόν με κἀὶ τὸ σὔμφερον ποεῖ.[3]

Right and expediency combine to sanction obedience to authority, and Neoptolemus is Sophocles' incarnation of the chivalrous spirit in contrast with the politic.

Fr. 618 is against demagogues who make right and sober-sense to be trampled under foot;[4] *Fr.* 194 argues for freedom of speech.

Even dismissing the anecdotes related of Sophocles which allege his participation in politics, we may judge that the Periclean system—democracy under a very powerful president—satisfied him as likeliest to keep the human and divine code, the general and the

[1] *O. C.*, 759.
[2] *Phil.*, 385.
[3] *Phil.*, 926.
[4] *Fr.*, 618.



individual charter of right from collision; which only a strong element of personality in government will achieve. He was keenly alive to the dangers of consecrating administrative right—much in the way that M. Arnold reproaches our race for idolising machinery to the neglect of the spirit—

τό τοι νομισθὲν τῆς ἀληθείας κρατεῖ.[1]

But he feared the excesses of the later democracy more. There is nothing improbable in the story that he approved the reaction of the CCCC as the least of possible evils: it was a revolution made by thinking men. And he says in the speech of Creon before cited, ἀναρχίας γὰρ μεῖζον οὐκ ἔστιν κακόν:[2] the eloquent heat of the passage seems to show that it is his own thought, though spoken by Creon.

But his nature was fundamentally unpolitical, too fine for politics, too deeply impregnated with the sense of human futility to take politics seriously at all times. The sum of his political philosophy is—

ἡ φρόνησις ἀγαθὴ μέγας θεός,[3]

and

ἡ δε μωρία
μάλιστ' ἀδελφὴ τῆς πονηρίας ἔφυ.[4]

The divine law is always more really present

[1] *Fr.*, 84.
[2] *Ant.*, 668.
[3] *Fr.*, 837.
[4] *Fr.*, 840.



to his consciousness than any realities, which gives the logical thoroughness to his system that is sometimes called Jesuitical. See his notable assertion of the doctrine that the end justifies the means:—

> "Alone by God's preferment man is wise:
> A man must walk, keeping on God his eyes,
> The road he's bid, tho' Justice be transgress'd:
> Nothing is vile of all the Gods suggest." [1]

M. Arnold's phrase is perfectly true: that he "saw life whole." His serenity feels equally the vanity of human wishes and human fears [2] (*Fr.*, 62). Few more pessimistic things have ever been said than—

> οὐδὲν γὰρ ἄλγος οἷον ἡ πολλὴ ζοή.
> —*Fr.*, 509.

And yet he is not a pessimist. Only the almost sentimental turn for melancholy which marks the Ionian is strong in him, as in all natures which are hyperæsthetic both of pains and pleasures.

In no respect is he more purely a Greek than this: his morality is imaginative. Morality inculcated apart from religion is simply unmeaning to such minds; for them there are the two alternatives of piety rendered with

[1] *Fr.*, 227.

[2] *Aj.*, 125; *O. C.*, 1211; *Fr.*, 12; *Fr.*, 103; *Fr.*, 860.

enthusiasm as service to a personal deity regarded with imaginative love and awe—or pure hedonism. There is no reason to doubt the stories which report sensuousness of Sophocles: we expect it of one so richly gifted with the power of visualising, one who thinks in images. The words related by old Cephalus in the opening of the *Republic*, ὥσπερ ἄγριον καὶ λυττῶντα δεσπότην, are in the same key with Dante's confession and Michelangiolo: we could match them in "The expense of spirit in a waste of shame."

In the splendid fragment—

δεινὸν τὸ τῆς Πειθοῦς πρόσωπον—[1]

I suspect it is Peithô, the handmaid of Aphrodite. The fragment from *Lovers of Achilles* is very noteworthy:—

> "Sickness of love's a mischief fugitive:
> No bad comparison is this I'll give—
> Boys when the heavens are frosty, in a trice
> Will fill their hands with lumps of dripping ice,
> And first 'tis all delight and wonder, then
> The lump no more will be let go again,
> Nor yet be pretty treasure to retain.
> E'en so with lovers: oft the one desire
> Shall them to do and not to do require." [2]

In another fragment it is the δῆγμ' ἔρωτος;[3]

[1] *Fr.*, 780. [2] *Fr.*, 154. [3] *Fr.*, 757.

in the same context falls to be considered the longer passage:—

ὦ παῖδες ἦ τοι Κύπρις οὐ Κύπρις μόνον.[1]

He is extremely sensitive to horrors which shock the imagination: his mastery of language enables him to use such delicacy of euphemism in *Œdipus Rex* and *Œdipus Coloneus* that his subject is never repulsive. Shelley matches him in the *Cenci*. Ford's handling in *'Tis pity*, &c., is deliberately different, as his plot requires.

And yet on occasion he was no Puritan to shirk calling a spade a spade (*Fr.*, 441); the same undignified domestic object plays a part in a fragment of the Ἀχαιῶν Σύλλογος.[2] Ovid speaks of his *in obscaenos deflexa tragoedia risus*.[3]

He kept his idealism for ideal spheres. He did not dislike the national aptitude for roguery and cunning; his partiality for the hero of ingenuity—Odysseus, whom his enemies called a bastard of Sisyphus—is evident. In *Ajax* it is Odysseus who represents εὐβουλία; in *Philoctetes* he is contrasted, but not unkindly, with the chivalrous temper of Neoptolemus; the sentiment in *Phil.* 97 would come home to every Greek hearer as national. So, too, the argument

[1] *Fr.*, 856. [2] *Fr.*, 141. [3] *Trist.* ii., 409.

of Orestes, *δοκῶ μὲν οὐδὲν ῥῆμα σὺν κέρδει κακὸν*,[1] and the exclamation—

> *οὐδὲν γὰρ ἀνθρώποισιν οἷον ἄργυρος*[2]
> *κακὸν νόμισμ' ἔβλαστε,*

is put into the unsympathetic mouth of the doctrinaire Creon.

Fr. 25 is an anticipation of *virtus laudatur et alget*, but not satirically spoken—

> *σὺ δ' αὐτὸς ὥσπερ οἱ σοφοὶ τὰ μὲν*
> *δίκαι' ἐπαίνει, τοῦ δὲ κερδαίνειν ἔχου,*

which Athenaeus deprecates as *πονηρῶς εἰρημένον*. The praises of money are the theme also of *τὰ χρήματ' ἀνθρώποισι*,[3] &c. *Fr.* 325 gives a casuist defence of justifiable untruth: so does 327. The didactic Plutarch quotes and disapproves the line—

> *τὸ κέρδος ἡδὺ κἂν ἀπὸ ψευδῶν ἴῃ.*[4]

There are several recorded instances, and doubtless our own experience furnishes more; sometimes it shows as a racial characteristic—of minds which combined an intensely idealist or mystic disposition with a keen business sense: S. Teresa and Mr. Gladstone, to cite no others. And so in Sophocles the two parts of wise man of the world and idealist permeated with

[1] *El.*, 61. [2] *Ant.*, 296.
[3] *Fr.*, 86. [4] *Fr.*, 749.

mystical consciousness were doubled without incongruity.

There is one more aspect of his mysticism which I wish to elaborate before leaving this topic. It is his conception of Time. Time, either universally personified, or personified severally in its divisions, presented itself to Sophocles' imagination not as a mere "within-which," a setting, a condition, but as an agent effecting those things which take place within its duration. We have quasi personifying expressions for portions of time, as when we say, "that day was the author of many troubles," "that year saw Queen Victoria's death;" but the picturesque value of the language in these is dead; they are rhetorical variations. With Sophocles the personification is bold and lively, and of frequent recurrence—

χρόνος γὰρ εὐμαρὴς θεός.[1]

(*See* Wilamowitz' note on *Hercules*, 557.)

It is again χρόνος universally in

ὁ πᾶς ἂν πρέποι παρὼν ἐννέπειν
τάδε δίκᾳ χρόνος.[2]

Notice the boldness of the figure when Clytemnestra describes her anxious life—

ὁ προστατῶν χρόνος, &c.[3]

"Time, in whose protection I stood, led me the life of one ever awaiting death."

[1] *El.*, 179. [2] *El.*, 1255. [3] *El.*, 781.



In *Fr.* 280 he is

ὁ πάνθ' ὁρῶν
καὶ πάντ' ἀκόυων πάντ' ἀναπτύσσει χρόνος.

For determinations of Time so personified we have *αἰὼν*[1] represented as "ushering Hercules homeward and from home on somebody's errand." We remember old Œdipus' warning to Theseus of the fickleness of States. First it is *χρόνος*,[2] who in his omnipotence confounds all things except gods, then

"Time he goes his ways,
And countless Time breeds countless nights and days."[3]

But in *Antigone*[4] he says, "Neither slumber overtakes the pre-eminence of Zeus, slumber which lays traps for all things, nor shall the tireless months disperse it." And again, in a moment of strange exaltation, kindled by the gathering mystery of his birth, Œdipus says:—

"Chance is the mother who bare me, the months are my brothers; they have mapped out my seasons of great and lowly estate."[5]

And lastly, the *νύκτες καὶ ἡμέραι* are personified as agents.[6]

We can see how this mystical conception suits the serenity and completeness of his view on life: he traces every event back to this

[1] *Trach.*, 34.
[2] *O. C.*, 607.
[3] *O. C.*, 617.
[4] *Ant.*, 607.
[5] *O. T.*, 1082.
[6] *El.* 1365; *cf. O. C.*, 931.

all-embracing condition (as we think of it) as cause, over which God sits absolute; and by realising Time as a great dimension of Necessity, he realises the supernatural as present in detail in all things as Time unfolds them in sequence—

"Still at the roaring loom of Time I ply,
And weave for God the garment thou see'st Him by."

V

It is curious to contrast the fewness of his γνῶμαι with the ample Euripidean ŝtore; and it is typical of the finish of his work, that he scarcely ever shows the commonplace book; scarcely ever a passage betrays that it has been "got in" —so thorough is the unity of composition that it is like a natural growth, cut from which no specimen is organically complete. In Euripides we too often see the proverb or the tag of versified popular philosophy which has been composed separately, noted and introduced. But there are just a few proverbs which are worth quoting, if only for their comparative insignificance.

"Trying to mend mischief with mischief,"[1]

—borrowed maybe from Herodotus.

ἅπαν τὸ χρηστὸν γνησίαν ἔχει φύσιν,[2]

[1] *Fr.*, 75. [2] *Fr.*, 85.



which may bear some relation to the story of his own illegitimate son.

ἐκ κάρτα βαιῶν γνωτὸς ἂν γένοιτ' ἀνήρ,[1]

a dictum I wish were true in the attempt to decipher the author from his remains!

Fr. 371 gives his version of—

"Heaven helps those who help themselves."

Fr. 344 and 345 are substantially found up and down in Pindar; you may call them anticipations of *forsan et haec olim meminisse juvabit.* In misogynism he does not altogether belie the literary tradition of Greeks, though we think differently of the author of *Electra* and *Antigone.*

κάκιον ἄλλ' οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδ' ἔσται ποτε[2]
γυναικός, εἴ τι πῆμα γίγνεται βροτοῖς.
From *Epigonoi.*

His *Tereus*[3] contained a very Euripidean passage of reflection on the lot of woman under the Greek régime.

Fr. 617, from *Phaedra*, is more like the Book of Proverbs:—

γυναικὸς οὐδὲν ἂν μεῖζον κακὸν
κακῆς ἀνὴρ κτήσαιτ' ἄν, οὐδὲ σώφρονος
κρεῖσσον· παθὼν δ' ἕκαστος ὧν τύχῃ λέγει.

The last comment was just the point of the

[1] *Fr.*, 262. [2] *Fr.*, 188. [3] *Fr.*, 521.

gibe against Euripides. Lastly, one which you parallel by the pageful from Horace and the Latin elegiac poets—

ὅρκους ἐγὼ γυναικὸς εἰς ὕδωρ γράφω.[1]

VI

Strictly personal allusions, of the petty autobiographical kind, such as self-conscious poets indulge in, I know not one in his works for certain; so consistently is his private self kept under by his artistic self. It is possible there may be a private motive at the bottom of the complaint in *Antigone*—

ὅστις δ' ἀνωφέλητα φιτύει τέκνα[2]
τί τόνδ ἂν εἴποις ἄλλο πλὴν ἄνοιαν πόνους
φῦσαι πολύν τε τοῖσιν ἐχθροῖσιν γέλων;

The words agree with the story that he had thankless sons; but then, in the want of anything to gratify curiosity about the poet, it may be that out of such passages as at least suggested a personal touch, were developed the corresponding stories.

Two fragments on Life[3] are burning with personal conviction, but any poet who lived to be ninety might write them with equal ardour—

τοῦ ζῆν γὰρ οὐδεὶς ὡς ὁ γηράσκων ἐρᾷ,

[1] *Fr.* 741. [2] *Ant.*, 645. [3] *Fr.*, 63 and 64.

and

τὸ ζῆν γὰρ ὦ παῖ πᾶντὸς ἥδιον γάνος·
θανεῖν γὰρ οὐκ ἔξεστι τοῖς αὐτοῖσι δίς,

and yet the same man could say—

οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλγος οἷον ἡ πολλὴ ζοή.

Creon's reproach to Œdipus' hot temper[1] may be a current proverb aptly introduced, or a touch of introspective analysis by the old poet, which posterity handed about as a proverb.

θυμοῦ γὰρ οὐδὲν γῆρας ἔστιν ἄλλο πλὴν
θανεῖν.

The opening sentiment of the chorus in

ὅστις τοῦ πλεόνος μέρους[2]

seems likewise inspired by personal feeling; but, as in the greatest poetry always, it is strong personal emotion with the egoism purged out of it, and grown typical and universally valid. Even the most finished artist may betray himself by the frequency with which his choice returns to certain subjects, for this is a bias unconscious and hard to check; but still it is only a suspicion that here we have the man himself behind the mask: the mask wears always its bidden expression, but the turn of the head in one direction belongs to the

[1] *O. C.*, 954. [2] *O. C.*, 1211.



man. So with this dwelling upon old age. There is one more passage on the same theme —the temper of age; but the corrupt text[1] allows no more than to see what the subject is.

One more topic and I have done with his matter considered in this artificial abstraction from its form in which we must needs consider it.

VII

A great deal of humbug is current about the classical neglect for Nature. We cannot go into the whole subject, for it is matter for a whole book. It is treated in charming English by Professor Hardie in a printed Inaugural. Briefly, the Greeks had a keen sense of natural beauty. But just as it was a surfeit of civilisation which turned aside to idealise the "noble savage" (*see* Leslie Stephen), so the Wordsworthian view of Nature is in essence an exaggerated reaction from artificiality. The Nature-worship in Wordsworth and Meredith is rather pantheistic than pagan in feeling. To the Greeks, just as the powers of Nature were figured in anthropomorphic gods, so brute Nature was admired and loved in relation to man. The reaction turns to forest and

[1] *Fr.*, 808.



moorland, to the wilderness. Newman has the classical feeling when, in a lovely description of rich, cultivated provincial Africa, he says that the natural beauty is touched with a human sentiment because the mark of human service is upon it all. Man's labour has turned it to man's blessing.

The chorus in *Œdipus Coloneus*, which sings the beauties of Colonos, is perhaps the most hackneyed thing in Greek literature on the subject; yet, mind you, even here it is the glory of Nature subjugated by Art. Left to bare Nature, the hill of Colonos is to-day a barren earth-heap. Sophocles celebrates the beauties of Nature in luxuriant cultivation—the nightingales of Colonos sing in a grove planted by man; the streams of Ilissos are shepherded by man in order to irrigate. So, too, in a lovely fragment preserved by Cicero, Sophocles—*uus amicus*, as Cicero calls him, addressing the bland and genial Atticus—

φεῦ φεῦ τ' τοὔντου χάρμα μεῖζον ἂν λάβοις
τοῦ γῆς ἐπιψαύσαντα κᾆθ' ὑπὸ στέγῃ
πολλῆς ἀκοῦσαι ψακάδος εὐδούσῃ φρενί;[1]

"Ah! is there any greater joy than this?
To touch the land, and then, well-roof'd from weather,
Drowsily hear the raindrops plash together?"

[1] *Fr.*, 574.

Not the beauty of rain for its own sake, coat or no coat, but the same feeling as inspired Lucretius' *Suave, mari magno.* The roof makes the charm of the rain.

VIII

We have tried to trace the outline of his thought, to extract his opinion upon certain questions, bring out certain conceptions which seemed significant for the reconstruction of his personality. The outline of his thought only: for the language in which thought incarnates itself makes the very colour of the thought. We have observed a certain serenity and completeness as the dominant notes in his disposition. These qualities correspond exactly in his language.

But, first, let us note a few judgments of the ancients upon his style. The *Anthology*[1] contains a pretty piece by Simmias the Theban—

> "Creep softly, ivy-plant, and softly o'er
> Sophocles' grave thy tresses green outpour:
> Bloom roses here at large, and cluster'd vine
> Her lissom tendril circumfus'd entwine,
> For him who made in honey'd style discreet
> The influences of Muse and Grace to meet."

[1] *Anth. Palat.*, vii. 22.

εὐεπίης πινυτόφρονος for his writing and ὁ μελιχρὸς for himself are Simmias' words.

Plutarch, in the essay *de gloria Atheniensium*, praises Aeschylus for στόμα, "large utterance," Euripides for σοφία, "ingenuity," and distinguishes Sophocles for λογιότης, which we may render "eloquent facility." The scholiast selects the ode in *Œdipus Coloneus*[1] as an example of γλαφυρὸν καὶ ᾠδικὸν μέλος, "smooth and tuneful poetry."

Now Burke says of smoothness that it is "a quality so essential to beauty that I do not now recollect anything beautiful that is not smooth." Remember that he is distinguishing beautiful from sublime. Uncertainty is sublime. But where he says, "A great clearness helps but little towards affecting the passions, as it is in some sort an enemy to all enthusiasms whatever," he makes a statement which hardly allows for the special requirements of drama. Modern critics have found "transparency" to be the great character of Sophocles. And justly: only it is a transparency where the eye penetrates deep and deeper, and yet never finds bottom. *Smallness* is another of Burke's attributes for beauty; and, if we are not straining his meaning, it is true that the definiteness and neat comprehensibleness of each phrase is

[1] *O. C.*, 668.



among Sophocles' excellences — though it is idle to look for beauty alone and not sublimity, in the face of Longinus' opinion; and there are moments in the style where precisely the baffling vagueness of the phrase is a virtue.

It seems to happen that the colloquial ease, the middle diction of Coleridge, the walk of language which lies common to poetry and prose, is only accessible to those whose minds are well nourished with reading and experience of the world. Contrast a Byron or a Shelley even (in many of his pieces) with a Keats. And here again character and circumstances tell upon style: the shyness of a recluse or unpopular poet will draw him into a diction quite removed from that of everyday life, or else draw him into a cynical protest against the dignities of convention. In Euripides we see both. Sophocles found that he could so handle the common speech that with only a rare occasional stilting it rose high enough for the elevation of poetical thought. He hardly ever puzzles his audience. But we shall see that in some of his phraseologies he appears to enjoy using a peculiar ambiguity—the nature of which is that the language bears a superficial construction obvious enough to save the plain man from stumbling, whereas to an ear which retains and weighs the whole sentence, another

and subtler construction is found to be involved.

I have mentioned Longinus. You are familiar with the censure which he pronounces upon Sophocles and Pindar together. Certainly each is sinning in good company!

"There are times when by sheer force their style seems as it were a general conflagration, but there are many times when they sink extinguished unaccountably and fall most disastrously." [1]

We may not disregard the criticism, because Plutarch also accuses Sophocles of ἀνωμαλία,[2] and Dionys. Halic.[3] has this sentence: "And often he falls from full grandeur to hollow pretension; I mean he ends by being quite mean and homely." This might be Dr. Johnson on Wordsworth! Or for a better example how far a critic may be misled by the contemporary fashion, think of Dr. Johnson describing the metre of Lycidas as "harsh and unpleasing." Plutarch's judgments in pure literature are to be taken with a caution, because he is infected with the didactic and moralising bias of a decadence. But the author of the περὶ ὕψους is generally appreciative; and in order to justify his remark, we must suppose that Sophocles did not always write on the

[1] *De Subl.*, xxxiii. 5. [2] *De Rect. Aud. Poet.*, 13.
[3] *Vett. Script. Cens.*, ii. 11.

level of our seven plays. Particularly, it may be supposed that in the period when he was consciously reforming the diction of drama, he may have been guilty of too violent contrasts between the Aeschylean tradition and the new protesting manner. I think we could point to plenty of cases in the poetry of the Wordsworth epoch where an echo of the eighteenth century tradition, rhetorical and conventional, offends sharply against the tones of the new plain style.

Therefore I do not feel that we need be disturbed in the conclusion that the note of Sophocles' style is smoothness and evenness. And it is a smoothness and evenness secured quite as much by levelling down as levelling up. Read any whole play through, and you will not fail to be struck by the sobriety of Sophocles in abstaining from purple patches which make the surrounding fabric look homely and dingy. In his best plays he never embroiders; however rich the fabric, it is self-coloured and woven in one piece. It realises in poetry what Boutmy, as already quoted, says of architecture (see p. xxxix.). I do not say that there are no passages especially *stilisirt*, but even where, in obedience to the convention, he runs into descriptive bravuras in a ῥῆσις (*e.g.* the chariot race in *Electra*[1] and the Seven against

[1] *El.*, 680.



Thebes in *Œdipus Coloneus*[1]), the lines do not stand out as overcharged ornament detracting attention from the general effect. They do not monopolise memory, or figure as set pieces which would be no less effective in a book of elegant extracts than in their own organic place in the work.

To the same principle or craft belongs his practice in the matter of metaphor. Violent metaphors are retrenched; where the metaphor is inclined to be too sudden and startling, apt rather to perplex than to please and illuminate, he carefully suits the context in order to abate it. Two examples from *Ajax:* the hero is described in his moody fit of dejection after the return of his reason:[2]—

"Get thee up from thy seat where thou art upreared in this livelong anguished repose, kindling the flame of destruction heaven high! Meanwhile the pride of foes runs and spreads unabashed in draughty valley floors."

The double metaphor from conflagration is mutually supported and eased.

Again, the madman is likened to "a moping herdsman of the mind,"[3] and a little later the same figure is delicately suggested in the words, "No more he abides in the familiar *stock* of moods, but consorts aloof."[4]

[1] *O. C.*, 1300.
[2] *Ajax*, 195.
[3] *Aiax*, 614.
[4] *Ajax*, 640.



Not that this self-restraint in writing debars him from striking hard and boldly at times; but it saves him from the bewildering rapidity with which Aeschylus breaks from one metaphor to another, each rather indicated than developed. Of Sophocles' force when he lets it go, no better instance than the fragment of *Teukros*, in which Telamon (or his wife), upon learning Ajax's death, says—Teukros had perhaps celebrated his brother's heroism before confessing he was dead:—

> "O vain delight, wherewith I was delighted,
> To hear his praise, as one alive, recited!
> The fiend of Death in darkness all the while
> Fawning upon me let the joy beguile."[1]

So constant is the tone of diction to which metaphor and choice of words conform, that if Sophocles is true to Sophocles, we are safe in rejecting the passage which amplifies the text ἐχθρῶν ἄδωρα δῶρα,[2] not only on the grounds of its singularities, but its violent over-emphasis of diction. Who knows but that Alexander Aetolus, who recensed the Dramatists for the Museum Library, may not have permitted himself to add such an embellishment?

I have said something of the Sophistic influence—that they were the first grammarians. Sophocles derived a much more valuable

[1] *Fr.*, 516. [2] *Ajax*, 1028.

inheritance from them in cultivating this province than did Euripides. Sophists' rhetoric, the mere ingenuity of finding pros and cons, and phrasing them with point and neatness, is never perhaps quite absent from Stichomuthia, but passages like *Ajax*, 265, where Tecmessa *sophises* over her grief, are rare enough in Sophocles. But as a manipulator of language we compare him with Virgil and Tennyson. In each case it is a serene temperament that takes exact count of the values and origins and associations of words as they pass, and arranges them conformably. He is one of those masters of style who resist in every page the flattening, disfiguring effect of usage upon current speech. The dead picturesqueness in a word is recalled to life by a cunning collocation, the flattened metaphor repointed, the slipshod phrase erected into dignity and significance by some slight repair. He plays with words as only a man with the philologer's sense of their derivations can play.[1] He loves such expressions as are philologically ambiguous, though usage has determined them toward one meaning; these he arranges so as to do duty in another. And often he seems to retain a wilful ambiguity, where either sense suits his context, for love of being doubly φωναέντα συνετοῖσι. The genius

[1] *O. C.*, 46, 1267–70, 189; *O. T.*, 338; *O. C.*, 996.



of the language favoured such finesses, *e.g.* in the case of compound adjectives. See a phrase like *πρᾶγος ἄσκοπον*:[1] it might mean "a dark business —hard to understand," an "unwatched business," an "unwatchful business." Compare here *πρόσχημ' ἀγῶνος* of *El.* 682; his juggling with the equivoques in *ἄπιστος, ἀπειθής, ἀπιστεῖν, ἀπιθεῖν*:[2] *ἄσεπτος, Fr.* 48 (*cf. Œdipus Coloneus*, 1022, *ἐγκρατεῖς*).[3] The Scholiast's phrase *ἰδίως ἐσχημάτισε τον λόγον*[4] is true many times over. The passage is not a bad instance of his technique:—

> *ὦ ξεῖνε μὴ θαύμαζε πρὸς τὸ λιπαρὲς*
> *τέκν' εἰ φανέντ' ἄελπτα μηκύνω λόγον.*[5]

See how he has quickened an everyday phrase so as to enforce attention, and contrived to indicate in a dozen words all that, expressed fully, would have been said in—

> *μὴ θαύμαζε πρὸς τὸ λιπαρὲς εἰ λιπαρῶς*
> *ἀέλπτων φανέντων τῶν τέκνων μηκύνω*
> *τὸν περὶ τούτων λόγον.*

And, above all, notice how the full effect depends upon the order in which the words strike the ear; the interlinking of members in the phrase, the art of making a word or a member do double duty, consists chiefly in the order of words. I have not time to develop the

[1] *Ajax*, 21. [2] *Ant.*, 656. [3] *O. T.*
[4] *Schol. on O. C.*, 1119. [5] *O. C.*, 1116.



examples in detail: it must suffice to note that the figure government *ἀπὸ κοινοῦ* is a favourite resource of his, and leave the student to work out the instances. Here are some references: *Ajax*, 330, 763, 792.

No writer cuts his language more exactly to fit his thought, is more free from that degradation of style to which the newspapers have brought us—I mean the state where we clothe our thought in *reach-me-downs*, where a single word is never used but it draws after it by association some dead phrase: such a lingo as "constitutes a leading feature in the situation" —four dead metaphors bundled together into a phrase which, to any one who is sensitive to the significances of words, is more ludicrous than all the Irish bulls; a phrase *πρόσθε λέων ὄπιθεν δὲ δράκων, μέσση δὲ χίμαιρα*! Of course the danger of an over-acute sensitiveness to the rights of each word is that it may run into pedantry, which refuses any compromise with usage. Sophocles saves himself from that excess by his steady approximation to the ease but not the laxity of colloquial speech. Natural stylists of the first water are invariably voluminous—Plato, Swift, Newman: Sophocles' total of composition must have been fully 100,000 lines. We cannot believe, then, that his subtlety and pregnancy of diction are the

fruits of intense revision and concentration. His ease must have horrified the ancient pedant as much as he has provoked the modern "scientific" critic. For instances of a phrase clear in meaning, but almost baffling analysis, take *Electra*, 466; *Ajax*, 176, 475; *Œdipus Coloneus*, 1019–1020, 967.

Words must be forced to yield their maximum of significance: that is the principle by which he makes a seemingly plain and transparent style equal to the interpretation of the subtlest thought. Thought must be working in every corner of the phrase. Good writing, of course, postulates a good reader: the telegram style of composition is worthy of the reader who runs his eye down the page collecting keywords, and only stopping where it meets an obstacle. One of the greatest resources for coercing language into expressing an uncommon thought is the figure called oxymoron—a form contrary to the axioms of verbal logic, but a form alone able to express some of the deepest intuitions of the mind. For one instance of this trick of forcing language to say two things and two contradictory things, both true, at once, take *Œdipus Coloneus*, 131; or the *anguished repose* in the passage (*Aj.* 195) quoted on p. lxxvii.

One of his favourite manœuvres for quickening those parts of a sentence which would

otherwise be mere grammatical fillings (cases where thought dispenses with what grammar requires to express) is his treatment of the substantive verb. Greek grammar employs the present participle ὤν in a number of usages where the thought would be content with its ellipse; so that ὤν tends to become a dead word in the sentence. Sophocles reinforces its significance by compounding it with σύν, ἀπό, ἐπί, παρά, so that it helps out the general sense of the passage. Instances are many: *Ajax*, 267, 338 (*cf.* also 491), 610, 855; *Œdipus Rex*, 457, 863; *Philoctetes*, 161; *Œdipus Coloneus*, 7, 772, 946, 498.

His employment of personification is remarkably restrained in comparison with Aeschylus. To take only the examples in *Œdipus Coloneus*,[1] you will see that in each case the personification serves to make an otherwise trite sentence vivid, but without being fantastic. But in this particular, as also in the choice of metaphor,[2] he is specially admirable in suiting the phrase and the colouring of the phrase, its more or less of poetical and imaged quality, to the character. This is best seen by collecting the figures and metaphors in a Messenger's speech—

[1] *O. C.*, 240, 267, 612, 658, 855, 1281.
[2] *Ajax*, 348.

the watchman in *Antigone* is a good example[1]—and contrasting them with those used by, say, Creon in the same play.

Evaluation of words, to judge just how a particular phrase struck the contemporary ear, whether this metaphor was felt as a figure or as a dead cipher, what were the associations of this word, what did this particular collocation of words say to the emotions or the intelligence of the Periclean audience: such questions are the highest problems of philology. Our *Scholia*, silly as they sometimes are, and shirking cruces to expatiate on the obvious as they do, are still the best guide to a solution: they are the comments of men who thought in Greek, however debased a Greek. That blood is thicker than water for these purposes, that a living tradition is worth all the industry of a studious barbarian, is sufficiently proved to anybody who observes the essentially different sympathy and finesse with which an Italian or a Frenchman handles a classical matter—Fraccaroli or Croiset compared even with a Wilamowitz v. Moellendorff.

It is a profitable exercise to go through any

[1] In this character we seem to hear the very voice of the people: mother wit, garrulity, poetical quality in imagery, homely directness, and a slightly ludicrous echo of the cleverness, psychological or verbal, of the exquisites of Athens—like the crumbs of learning or science which fall into our modern popular newspapers.



given portion of the *Scholia* and gather the points which the ancient commentators selected for admiration. In the *Scholia* on *Ajax*, nothing comes in for so much praise as Sophocles' skill in observing ἦθος, "characterising"; but the critics commended also, in a great many places, the pathos (περιπαθὴς, ἐμπαθὲς, παθητικὸν, πάθος); stagecraft (οἰκονομία) is another selected merit; and the expressions, προκόπτει ἡ ὑπόθεσις, συνέχειν τὴν ὑπόθεσιν, belong to another class: they refer to the skill with which episodes, dialogues, and all the rest of the machinery are made to subserve the general purpose.

. . . . .

Finally, we come back on M. Arnold: "he saw life steadily and saw it whole." An idealist to the bottom of his nature, he still found the best philosophy was to "keep his place among the living." Other-worldliness never soured this world for him; sense of the supernatural did not dry up the natural aptitudes and passions; death did not spoil life for him, Ionian though he was. He could see the world full of contradiction and not turn cynic. His dramatic eye saw the awful conflict between the law of conscience and the law of the State; but the humble sweetness of good temper and good sense found a solution for all doubts. He always appealed from the momentary to the

total experience. And he was true to himself in his art. The form in which he set himself to work was a compromise, a coalition of elements which tended to fly apart, only maintained by tact of craftsmanship. And as in his view of life, as in his method as a dramatic poet, so in his use of language: he always leads into the large outlook. Every word must be subordinated to the phrase; every sentence to the speech, the dialogue, the total expression of the character to be presented; and, lastly, no inorganic ornament, nothing that unduly concentrates the attention which should be equally distributed over the whole, nothing that is not a member or feature of the living body into which the whole work grows.

πολλῶν καλῶν δεῖ τῷ καλόν τι μωμένῳ (*Fr.* 853).

He speaks for a great era: Renan said that if he had three lives, one of the other two should have been devoted to writing the history of the age of Pericles. I wish this volume might be able to convey to an English reader some indication of the message and the voice—a worthy message and a true voice.

Note.—References to the Fragments follow the numbering of Nauck's edition of 1856.



KING ŒDIPUS





KING ŒDIPUS

SCENE.—*Before the gates of the Palace at Thebes. On the steps are grouped a number of citizens, young and old, in the garb of suppliants; foremost among them a* PRIEST.

Enter ŒDIPUS *from the Palace.*

Œd. Fresh brood of bygone Cadmus, children dear,
What is this posture of your sessions here
—Betufted on your supplicating rods?[1]
The while with groans and calling on the Gods
The city's filled, and incense[2] fumes the while.
For this, I, Œdipus, whom all men style
The Famous, came in person, and preferred
To take no message by another's word.
What means your station? Tell, old Sir, for here
You are the proper spokesman: is it fear,
Or adoration?[3] Never doubt my will
To help you freely. Hard the heart that still
Unmoved such congregation could withstand!

Priest. Nay, Œdipus, high Sovereign of my land,
You see us at your altars, what we are:
Some having yet no strength to flutter far,
Some heavy in age; priests, even as I of Zeus,
And picked of the youth;[4] tufted (the suppliant's use)



At Pallas' twofold[5] fanes the populace
Sits close, and others keep the Market-place,
Or hug the oracular Ismenian dust.[6]
Because the city, as see it, Sire, you must,
Rolls rudely on a bloody surge adrift,
And no strength left her head fro' the deep to uplift:
Wasting in the fruitful blossoms of the earth,
Wasting in the herds of the field, and barren birth
Of women;—ay, and worse—the God of Fire[7]
Pitches and harries in a plague most dire:
Under whose hand is Cadmus' house made void,
Black Hell with groans and lamentations cloyed.
'Tis not because of Gods we make you peer,
We and these children crouch, your votaries, here;
But by a life's adventures first of men,
And dealings with the Power beyond our ken.
Are you not he who came to Cadmus' walls
And cleared us of the debt we paid as thralls
Of the Vixen Bard? Yet vantage none you had
Of us to teach you; God alone could add
The gift by which 'tis said and 'tis believed
Our city's fallen fortunes you retrieved.
Once more, majestic Lord, the People's King,
All we in suppliant petitioning[8]
Pray you find help—whether in God you can,
Whose voice you hear, or know of any in man.
I've seen the advice of men schooled in events
Prove vital truth even in its accidents.[9]
Up then! O Prince of men, our State upraise!
Up, look! for loyal help in other days
The land acclaims you Saviour: that is well.
But leave not of your reign this tale to tell:



We stood upright, but we fell down anon.
Make fast the base you raise the State upon !
A bird flew lucky when you blest us then ;
O be a match for your old self again !
If rule the land you must as reign you do,
Rule it not empty, but with people too :
For neither ship nor castle's worth a feather
Devoid of men to dwell therein together.

Œd. Poor children ! The desire that brings you there
Is known, no secret : oh, I'm well aware
You suffer all, and suffering as you do,
I suffer more than any one of you.
Your anguish comes on one sole self apart,[10]
On each but not on other ; while my heart
Bewails the State, myself, and each and all.
So not from slumbering indolence at all
You stirred me : many are the tears I poured,
Many the devious paths of thought explored.
One cure I've tried—when search could yield no other,—
Sent Creon, Menoeceus' son, my own wife's brother,
To Phœbus' Pythian House to question how
My act or word may rescue all. And now
The day already with the time compared
Makes me uneasy how the mission's fared :
He's too long gone, past reasonable date.
But when he comes, reproach me then—but wait—
If I perform not all the God dictate.

[CREON *is descried approaching.*

Priest. Why, opportunely said ! They signify
To me this instant Creon drawing nigh.

O Lord Apollo! Saving be the chance
That guides his foot—bright news to suit his glance!

Œd. Why, at a guess, he's as we'd have him—nay,
Else he would never come with berried bay[11]
So thickly garlanded. We soon shall know—
He's within scale of earshot now. What ho!
Son of Menoeceus, Prince, my kinsman, say,
What news d'you bring us from the God this day?

Enter CREON *in garb of pilgrimage, wearing a wreath of bay leaves.*

Cre. Good news.[12] I tell you dark may yet be bright
Tho' ne'er so dark, if all come out aright.

Œd. But what's the text? For all you tell us here,
I see no cause for confidence or fear.

Cre. You're pleased to hear't in these men's neighbourhood?
I'm nothing loth; or if within were good—

Œd. Speak before all! Much more for them I make,
Mourning than ever for my own life's sake.

Cre. Let me proclaim what from the God I heard:
Lord Phœbus speaks, with no ambiguous word,
Of some defilement, bids *Drive out th' accurst*
Your land has bred, not breed it for the worst.

Œd. With cleansings? Of what sort? How stands the fact?

Cre. Scapegoats to make, or blood for blood to exact:
'Tis this blood stirs the storm against the State.

Œd. Whose should it be, this new-discovered fate?

Cre. Sire, we had once a Sovereign in this land
Called Laïos, ere we felt your guiding hand.



Œd. I know[13]—by name, tho' not by sight, I own.
Cre. He died: 'tis for his death this clear command
Bids us requite the felons, yet unknown.
Œd. Where in the world are they? Who at this time
Shall hit the baffling trail of ancient crime?
Cre. He said, *Within the country. Seek is find;*
He fails to catch who does not give his mind.
Œd. At home, or on his lands, or foreign ground
Was Laïos when this bloody fate he found?
Cre. Abroad, supposed on pilgrimage. From when
He first set out, he came no more again.
Œd. And never word? No escort there to view?
No sure report that might have given a clue?
Cre. Why, no—they died; save one who ran in fright:
One thing alone he'd tell of all he might.
Œd. What's that? One thing may prove the key to much:
Permit us but the fringe of hope to touch.
Cre. Robbers, he said, no force of one, assailing,
Slew him by multitude of hands prevailing.
Œd. How could this robber,[14] though, so far aspire,
Unless by dealings in this place, for hire?[15]
Cre. Such things were in our thoughts. But Laïos gone,
Hard times we had and none to champion.
Œd. Hard times? The crown thus fallen, what times so hard
Stood in the way and full inquiry barred?
Cre. The Sphinx it was whose riddle-song inclined us
To look to ourselves and leave such doubts behind us.
Œd. No! From the start, anew I'll bring to light!
Rightly did Phœbus, aye, and you were right



To have regard for his behoof so dead.
My duty leagues me with you : on his head
Of God and Land avenger I'll appear.
Not in the cause of one remotely dear,
But in my own, this blot will I dispel.
Whoe'er it was, may choose on me as well,
Matching that stroke, to wreak his cut-throat spite ;
My battle, when I take his part, I fight.
My sons, make haste, from the altar steps begone
Taking your votary branches ; and let one
Advise the nation all things shall be done
By me. For with God's help we will prevail
Before the eyes of all the world, or fail.

Priest. Let us arise, my sons ; for this we came,
And now we have his promise to the same.
May Delphi's God, who sent the message thence,
Prove Saviour too to stay this pestilence !



CHORUS

(*1st Turn.*)

Welcome, O Word o' the Lord, from the Pythian treasury coming,
What news, what news to radiant Thebes?
Heartstrings wrung with alarm, to the dances of terror a-drumming,
In worship I wait for thee, breathless ——:
Delian, Healer, all hail! what event shall the hour or the cycle of seasons hereafter
Yield to me? Tell it, O heavenly Rumour, O daughter of Expectation, O deathless!

(*1st Counter-turn.*)

Deathless Athena, the daughter o' Zeus, in a hymn we resound thee
The first, with Her that guards our glebes!
Artemis, high-set in honour, a ring o' the Market around thee!
And Phœbus! Archer! appear to me!
Succouring Trinity, come, for if Evil arose i' the air, ye were mighty to waft her
Flame fro' the border away: ye have helpĕd of old, yet again be you near me!



(*2nd Turn.*)

Innumerable agony is all my portion!
O misery! All my host are ailing and I want for a blade to the onset,
Want for a weapon of wit. The fertility
No longer abounds in a happy dominion;
From shrill birth pangs—never health, but a death with abortion.
One after another, lo! they are seen on an arrowy pinion
Soar as a flame in a monstrous agility
Towards coasts behind the sunset.

(*2nd Counter-turn.*)

Innumerably wasted nation!
Progeny pitiless, against the ground, death-dealing, a litter unheeded!
Many a wife and a grey-haired mother
Moans loud a lament by the side o' the altars
In anguish wearily, votaries one with another.
Outflashes *Heal us!* where the whine of a litany falters.
Send us, Athena, the bitterly needed
Bright mien of consolation!



(*3rd Turn.*)

Arès, the monster of force, who now without the
bronze of shields
Clamorously round me blazes, make to race his
Headlong retreat, wellsped to leave behind our
fields
For vasty chambers Amphitrite hath her abode in under,
Or else to the billow of Thrace's
Churlish anchoràges!
For whatso Night to the tale remit,
Day comes up to seize on it.
Then slay thou him, O Zeus, O Sire,
Master of the lightning's fire,
Annihilate in a volley of thy thunder!

(*3rd Counter-turn.*)

O Lycian Lord, let us behold dauntless arrows dealt
abroad
From bended bow with gold gut entwined upon it,
Ordained for our deliv'rance, and the fiery-shod
Artemidean gleams wherewith Lycian hills she scoürs.
And I call to the Golden-Bonnet,
(Thebes his heritàge is),
Wine-visaged Bacchus, hailed with shouts,
Comrade in the Mænad routs,
To draw near and burn away
With bright auxiliar flambeaux' ray
The Power in Heaven disowned of Heavenly Powers!



Œd. Praying! Your prayer—if but my words you note
To treat your sickness with my antidote,
Help and alleviation you shall win:
Which words I now make public, having been
Foreign to the act and to the story new
(Else I'd not hunted far and found no clue),
Among you burghers all a burgher late—
I make this proclamation in the State.
Whoso of you knows by whose hand it was
That Laïos perished, son of Labdakos,
I charge him signify the whole to me.
And if he fears, why self-reproach shall be
A self-defence forestalled: he shall but leave
The land, unscathed, nor any hurt receive.
Also if any knows the assassin came
From foreign country, let him speak and claim
His money and his meed of thanks as well.
If speak you will not—should a man repel
Confession for his friend or self, in fear;
What I'll do then, of me you next shall hear.
That man, whoe'er he be, in all this land
Where I hold sway and empire, I command
That none shall lodge, nor speak with him, nor share
With him in sacrifice to Gods, or prayer;
Nor to the Washing of the Hands [16] admit;
But from their houses thrust The Curse—to wit,
This man of blood: for so the Pythian Chair
Of revelation did of late declare.
Such then my part, so mighty an ally
Of God and of the murdered man am I.
And may the man who did it, the Unknown,
Skulking, with more to help him, or alone,



Grind out his sinful days in the curse of sin.
Once more I pray: if he be found within
My home, beside my hearth, with my consent,
Then with this very curse may I be shent!
All this I charge on you to undertake
For my sake, and the Gods' sake, and the sake
Of this sad, God-forsaken, famished land.
For though it had not come by God's command,
You ought not so to have left this thing unpurged
—A good man murdered and a King!—but urged
Inquiry. Therefore seeing it is I
Hold sovereignty where once he held, and lie
Where once he lay; one wife to both bore seed—
Our children had been brothers too to breed
A brotherhood betwixt us (had his heirs
Not come to grief, but Destiny unawares
Swooped down upon his head): I will contend
For him,[17] as for my father, to the end,
For all these causes. Naught shall baulk my will
To find the men who raised a hand to kill
The son of Labdakos, and Polydore,
Old Cadmus, and Agênor, King of yore.
And may the Gods to all who do not so,
Render no increase of their acres, no
Fruit of their wives; but let them be infested
With plagues as now, and plagues yet more detested.
Cadmeans, who say me *Ay*, the Right befriend you,
And all the Gods for evermore attend you!

L. of Ch. As caught in the curse, I will in conscience say,
Sire, that I slew him not, and cannot lay

My finger on the assassin: Phœbus best
Could tell us who it is—he sent the quest.
Œd. 'Tis rightly said, but none with words like these
Can force the Gods to what they do not please.
Cho. Then I could say what seems the second best—
Œd. Wer't even a third, yet spare not to suggest.
Cho. None sees so eye to eye with Phœbus as
—Master with master—great Teiresias:
To ask of him were not to learn amiss.
Œd. Why, neither had I disregarded this.
I sent, at Creon's word, two emissaries;
And all this while I wonder how he tarries.
Cho. Aye, all beside's dull gossip, long since heard.
Œd. What's that? I keep an eye on every word.
Cho. Travellers killed him—so the story went.
Œd. Hearsay! Who's seen eyewitness to the event?
Cho. Well doubtless if he has his share in fear,
This curse of yours he'll not endure to hear.
Œd. Words will not fright who did not fear the deed.
Cho. Yet there is one to unmask him! Look, they lead
The saintly prophet hither, in whose mind
Truth dwells inbred alone of all mankind.

Enter TEIRESIAS, *led by a serving-boy.*

Œd. Dealer in all known arts and arts profound,
Truths in the sky and truth that walks the ground;
Altho' you cannot see, you understand
The pestilence that lies upon the land.
Master! Her only help and stay we hold you.
Phœbus—perhaps the messengers have told you?—



Sent answer to the question that we sent,
One thing alone can make this plague relent,
If Laïos' slayers we could ascertain;
They be despatched to banishment, or slain.
Your hints of augury do not now refuse,
Nor any other means diviners use.
Rescue yourself, your country, rescue me!
Rescue for all our blood-pollution be!
We're in your hand: no nobler task for man
Than doing good by all the means he can!

Tei. Well, well!
It is an awful thing to have the light
When light pays not. And though I grasped it tight
I let that slip me! Better not have come.

Œd. Heigh, what can make your comings-in so glum?

Tei. Let me go home! So you and I alone
Shall each go through the easier with his own.

Œd. This is an answer neither kind nor right
By Thebes that bred you—to refuse your light.

Tei. Truth flies away from lips that try to breathe her,
Like yours. No speaking is no blundering either.

Œd. If you have light, I charge you let us see't:
We all adore you suppliant at your feet.

Tei. Yes, for you have it not. I'll not proclaim
My secret that I may not blab your shame.

Œd. What's that? You know, and will not tell? You plan
To wreck the State, betray us every man?

Tei. I wish to spare myself, and spare you, pain.
Why probe me idly? You shall ask in vain.

Œd. Arch villain! Such a man as you would pique
A very stone to rage—you will not speak?
Impassive and impracticable as ever?



Tei. You chide my temper?[18] Look at home: you never
Have seen what's there—but *I* must be reproved!
Œd. Well, who could hear you speak and not be moved
To anger, that you flout your country so?
Tei. 'Twill come, whether I keep it dark or no.
Œd. If come it must, then tell me: 'tis my right.
Tei. I'll speak no further: you may vent your spite;
Give if you like your wildest anger play!
Œd. I'll out with all my anger bids me say.
I see it all! I tell you, I believe
This plot's your planting—you were chief to achieve
Save but in th' act of killing; had you sight
I'd call it yours and yours alone outright!
Tei. Is it so? I hereby hold you to obey
Your proclamation—never from this day
To speak a word to these or me: 'tis you,
The sinner whom the tainted Thebans rue!
Œd. Such insolence! You startle a sudden shape
Of words from covert, and you think to escape?
Tei. I stand escaped. My strength is in the truth.
Œd. Who put that in your mouth? The Craft forsooth?
Tei. You. I was loth, until you made me tell.
Œd. What tale? Repeat: I wish to learn it well.
Tei. Did you not take me, or is this a lure?
Œd. Repeat: I did not understand for sure.
Tei. You murdered him whose murderer you seek.
Œd. Not twice such crimes unpunished shall you speak!
Tei. Oh! shall I tell you more, for more provoking?
Œd. Yes, all you will! It weighs no more than joking.



Tei. You stand most foully to your kith and kin
Unknown : you see not where you are in sin.
Œd. Say on, say on—but you shall smart at length !
Tei. Not if so be the truth has any strength.
Œd. Yes, save for you ; but not for you—and why ?
You're blind alike in ear and mind and eye.
Tei. I pity you for that reproach, for who
Will not retort it presently on you ?
Œd. Since Night is all the nurse you have to rear you,
Nor I nor any who sees the light, need fear you.
Tei. True : it is not your fate by me to fall.
Apollo is enough. He'll work it all.
Œd. Are these inventions Creon's or your own ?[19]
Tei. He's not your bane, but you yourself alone.
Œd. O Wealth, and Kingship, art supreme in art,[20]
What envy do you treasure against the part
Men covet so to play ! For just this power,
Which Thebes unasked, a nation's proffered dower,
Put in my hands, this friend of long ago,
This trusty Creon seeks my overthrow—
Steals marches on me, hires yon charlatan
Stitch-plot, a rogue o' the wayside preacher clan,[21]
Blind in the art, sharp-eyed in gains alone !
When—tell me—was your prophet's title shewn ?
Where was your word of liberation which
Should rid us of the Balladmonger Bitch ?[22]
Ah ! 'Twas not every passer-by could read
Aright that riddle, mind you ! Here was need
Of inspiration : nothing proved your claim
To be inspired of birds or Gods. I came,



Œdipus, knowing nothing, and succeeded
By stroke of wit—no lore of birds I needed!
See who it is whose overthrow you plan,
And think to stand King Creon's righthand man!
I think that you and he who framed the attempt,
Shall find such scapegoats as you little dreamt!
But for the doting eld I see in you,
You should have learned the taste of what you brew!

L. of Cho. If we may judge, his words and yours no less
Are spoken, Œdipus, in bitterness:
Not such we want, but how to read the mind
Of God's response—'tis that we have to find.

Tei. King tho' you be, one charter of speech unites
The lord and liege: there I've my sovereign rights.
My life's not slave to you,[23] but Loxias' word.
Not Creon's creature I'll be registered.
I'm blind: you found yet one more taunt therein.
You've sight, and see not where you are in sin,
Nor where you dwell, nor whom you have to mate.
Of whom are you? You know not; and the hate
Of yours in death, and yours on earth in life—
You little guess it:—like a two-edged knife,
Mother's and father's grim pursuing ban
Shall drive you far from here, an outlawed man;
When eyes now strong have darkness for thei. beam,
Then where will not be haven to your scream?
And what Cithæron will not ring, when soon
You catch the burden of the nuptial tune



Which played you homeward bound, full sail, to wreck?
Of many horrors little now you reck
Which self with self and self with sons combine.
So now on Creon and these lips of mine
Heap your reproaches. When the day shall come
No man alive shall match your martyrdom.

Œd. This, and from him! And must I tolerate?
Damnation catch you quick! From out my gate
Get you gone home, return your road, and rid me!

Tei. *I* never would have come, had you not bid me.

Œd. Could I foresee your foolish talking, eh?
Long might you wait for word to pass my way!

Tei. Such is my sort: a fool in your esteem,
Tho' to your parents wise I used to seem.

Œd. Parents? Hold! Who of mortals got me—who?

Tei. This day shall prove your birth and ruin too.

Œd. Ever this over-riddling phrase obscure!

Tei. Such you excel at solving, to be sure.

Œd. Taunt as you will, 'tis there you'll find me great.

Tei. Yet, from your luck in that your troubles date.

Œd. It saved the land, I cannot count it bad.

Tei. Well, I'll be going: fetch me home, my lad.

Œd. Fetch you he shall! Annoy and hindrance your
Presence has been; sped, you'll not tease me more.

Tei. I will begone, but speak my errand first,
Nor fear your face: you cannot—do your worst—
Kill me. I tell you he whom all this time,
With threats and proclamations of the crime,

You seek,—he's in this place: a man who's passed
For foreign, but shall be declared at last
Theban true-born; and little cause shall find
To bless his luck. Seeing no more, but blind;
Instead of rich—a beggar, he shall range,
A stick to mark his steps, where all is strange.
He shall be found own brother to his own
Sons, and their father; husband he shall be shewn
And son of her who bore him—a father's wife
Served for the son who took his father's life.
Go, think on that! And if in aught you find
Me false, deny me the prophetic mind.

[*Exit, led.*





CHORUS.

(*1st Turn.*)

O who's the man
The Delphian Rock proclaims, the Rock sooth-saying,
Of crimes dared plan
Most bloody-handed crime of that manslaying?
'Tis time that he ply his pace
More lustily e'en than race
The coursers of Hurricane!
For, with lightnings to don him
And mailed in fire,
Cometh leaping upon him
The Son of the Sire:[24]
And Kêres unerring follow ever anear his train!

(*1st Counter-turn.*)

From new-revealed
Voice where a crest of snow Parnassus raises,
In every field
Track ye the nameless man the message blazes.
For wild in the woods he roams,
In antres alone he homes,
A bull on a lonely scaur.[25]
Very woeful and moping
In woeful walk,
Dooms dog him, yet hoping
The Dooms he shall baulk:
Alive from the Navel-shrine they flit on him evermore!



(*2nd Turn.*)[26]

Grim in the heart
  Grim is the doubt;
Augural art
  Puts me about.
Not to believe
  Nor to deny:
How to receive
  Helpless am I!
    Up in air
  Flown with surmise
Present nor past
  I realise.
Was it feud—Polybus' son
  And Labdakidai?
Nay at the time
News had I none,
No nor have I
    E'en at this season
Any proof wherewithal
  Tried as a test,
    I for the clan
Of the Labdakidai
    Shall attack such a man
  (All love him best!)
At the call of an untraceable crime!



(*2nd Counter-turn.*)

One thing I know :
  Zeus, he is wise,
Phœbus also ;
  All's to their eyes
Open on earth.
  Seers are but men.
My ken is worth
  Less than his ken ?
    Why of that
  Proof there is none
Sure. For a hit
  One may outrun
As a man t'other in wit :
  Tho' I'll never say
Ay, ay to it,
  Chide tho' they may,
    I will abide
      Story and reason.
We did see, we did prove :
  There was the maid
On a day, with her wings.
  Then, when all eyed,
Tried wit of the King's
  Gained him our love.
Felon ? here is a heart, still shall acquit !



Enter CREON.

Cre. Sirs, countrymen, a great complaint I bring.
Grim charges, say they, Œdipus the King
Lays at my door. The time's with trouble fraught,
And if he thinks that I have done him aught
By act or word to work him prejudice,
I care not, carrying such reproach as this,
For length of life. The damage of his charge
Tends not to single reference, but large
And general—traitor to the State proclaimed,
Traitor by you and those I care for, named.

L. of Cho. Ah, but perhaps to this reproach gave vent
The pinch of passion, not the heart's intent.

Cre. The word's abroad, by my intent the seer
Spoke, and the thing he spoke was insincere.

L. of Cho. That was the phrase, but the intent not clear.

Cre. Tell me, this accusation was it let
Fly from straight eyes and from a heart straight-set?

L. of Cho. Ah! I've no eyes for what my betters do.
Look! from the house he comes himself in view.

Enter ŒDIPUS.

Œd. You, fellow! How came you here? You have such face
Of impudence you seek my dwelling-place,
When yours, confest, is the hand that struck *him* down,
And you the redhanded robber of my crown!



In God's name, say, was't folly and cowardice
You saw in me could egg you on to this?
I should not see your stealthy, crawling plot?
—And if I did detect, resist it not?
The folly lies in your attempt—with *you*
To go a-kingdom-hunting, poor and few:
To bag such game needs men and money too.

Cre. D'you know what you must do? Hear word for word
My answer fair, and judge when you have heard.

Œd. You're sharp to speak, but I to hear am slow
From you, my bitter ascertained foe.

Cre. Just that one thing you'll hear me now refute.

Œd. Just one name, *villain!* you will not dispute.

Cre. 'Struth! If you reckon stubbornness is prized
Apart from sense, you are not well advised.

Œd. 'Struth! If you reckon that you shall not rue
Wrong done to kinsmen, ill-advised are you!

Cre. I cry you *Aye* to the justice of that word:
Explain what wrong by fault of mine's incurred.

Œd. Were you or were you not, in sending for
That solemn fool the Seer,—my counsellor?

Cre. And I am still the same, and minded thus.

Œd. How long ago is't now since Laïos——?

Cre. Did what? I do not know of what you spoke.

Œd. Obscurely perished by a mortal stroke?

Cre. 'Twere long and ancient dates to measure when.

Œd. Ha! Was this prophet in the business then?

Cre. Yes, wise as now, nor less esteemed was he.

Œd. Then at the moment, did he mention me?

Cre. Never—or never in my neighbourhood.

Œd. Made you no inquisition then for blood?

Cre. We did, most surely: and without avail.



Œd. Why did our sage not then proclaim his tale?
Cre. I know not: uninformed, I do not prate.
Œd. One thing you know, and well-informed could state.
Cre. What? If reply I can I'll not decline.
Œd. That, never, did not you with him combine,
He would have named this Laïos' murder *mine.*
Cre. Yourself you best know if he so did name it.
Your right of question, I myself now claim it.
Œd. Question away! No murderer I'll be seen.
Cre. Say, then: you have my sister for your queen?
Œd. That question will admit no answer *Nay.*
Cre. Your rule is one with hers, an equal sway?
Œd. She gets whatever she desires of me.
Cre. And I am equalised, to make you three?
Œd. Yes, 'tis in that you manifest your treason.
Cre. No—if as I do, with yourself you'd reason.
Now first consider this: Who'd choose to reign
—Think you—with terrors rather for his train
Than drowsy and secure, with powers the same?
King in my acts, to be a King in name—
My nature never lusted after it,
And no man else who keeps a sober wit.
Without alarm, I've all my will from you;
King, I'd have much against my will to do:
How could a throne be sweeter to possess
Than sovereignty and rule without distress?
I'm not yet so beguiled as to be fain
Of glory saving what consists with gain.
I've every man's Good-day, they all salute,
Your suitors ask for me to push their suit,
For all success for them comes only so.
Shall I, to gain that other, let this go?

No sober sense will e'er disloyal prove;
With such designs I'm not myself in love,
Nor would I follow did another move.
Proof of my words, go first to Pytho, learn
Whether a message true I did return;
Next, if you prove that there was any plot
'Twixt me and the soothsayer, kill me, not
By one vote, but by two, both yours and mine;
On blind surmise—no more—do not malign.
It is no justice lightly to conclude
A good man bad, nor yet a bad man good.
To lose an honest friend I count as bad
As if one lost the dearest thing he had,
The life lodged in his bosom. Time alone
Declares the just: in time shall all be shewn,
But villains in a single day are known.

L. of Cho. Well said—to one that's wary of a slip:
Quick thinking is a path where many trip.

Œd. Quick steals the plotter upon me: must I not
Be quick to parry with my counterplot?
If I must bide his time—the end is this,
His game is won and mine is all amiss.

Cre. What would you have? Will you exile me then?

Œd. No, no: I must have dead, not banished, men.

Cre. Not ere you shew the quality of your spite!

Œd. You speak defiant, unsubmissive quite.

Cre. You want your sober sense.

Œd. I see so far.

Cre. Farther I'd have you!

Œd. Villain that you are!

Cre. You do not understand.

Œd. I'll keep my crown!



Cre. And wear it in misuse?
Œd. My town, my town!
Cre. I too have part in Thebes, not only you.
L. of Ch. Hold, princes. In good time comes here to view
Jocasta from the doors.
With her you must
Your present quarrel happily adjust.

Enter JOCASTA *from the Palace.*

Joc. Unhappy men, what ailed you to proclaim
These factions of the tongue? Have you no shame,
The land thus plagued, to start new woes of yours?
[*To* ŒDIPUS.
I pray you, home: and Creon, within doors,
And do not aggravate a grief so null.
Cre. Sister, your husband claims the right to cull
And wreak on me a choice of monstrous ill
—To thrust me from my country, or take and kill.
Œd. I say him *Ay:* for I have found him use
Foul fraud my person foully to abuse.
Cre. Curses for blessings, self-invoked, I choose,
If e'er I did at all as you accuse.
Joc. Oh, in the name of God, accept his word—
His oath! For God's sake (that is first preferred),
But my sake too, and these your friends who've heard!



TRIO: ŒDIPUS, JOCASTA, CHORUS.

(*1st Turn.*)

Cho. Sire, hear me preach
Admonishment!
O relent,
I beseech!

Œd. What is't you beg me to concede?

Cho. Respect him, both
No fool before,
And all the more
Mighty now he takes the oath!

Œd. This plea . . . you mean?

Cho. I do!

Œd. Say! what indeed?

Cho. Friend that accepts a curse,
Never in disregard
Fling when the cause is hard
To read, better or worse!

Œd. Rest well assured, in pleading so you need
My ruin or my banishment to plead.

(*2nd Turn.*)

I' the Sun's name, his
That's prince among divinities,
No! God forsaken, forsaken of every friend—
If such be my purpose—
Dire prove my end!
But my poor heart is sore for my country
So waste and vext:
Sore to think that, bad to bad,
She needs must next
This your quarrel superadd.

Œd. Then ev'n if I must absolutely die,
Or else be flung from home in contumely—
Yet let him go!—altho' your lips, not his,
Move me, detested foe where'er he is!



Cre. A churlish grace in yielding, and a sore
Heart when you leave your angry fit: none more
Than their own selves such characters deplore.
Œd. Then go, and leave me!
Cre. I will, misunderstood
By you, but in their eyes my right is good.
[*Exit.*

(*1st Counter-turn.*)
Cho. Why more delay,
Lady? Bring
Home the King!
Lead, away!
Joc. I first will hear the circumstance.
Cho. Imaginings!
Tales misconceived!
A spirit grieved
By the sense of wrong that stings.
Joc. From both?
Cho. Oh yes!
Joc. What rumour so did chance?
Cho. Enough for me at least—
Is not the land in pain?—
To let it there remain
At rest where it ceased!
Œd. See where you stand! For all your sound intent,
You fail my cause, your loyal edge is bent!

(*2nd Counter-turn.*)
Cho. Not once alone,
I've said it, Sire, and be it known:
Lunatic were I utterly if I parted from thee,
A bankrupt in reason,
All men could see!
When my dear country labour'd in trouble,
Nigh founder'd quite,
Thou didst waft her home to shore:
O that thou might
Prove our saving convoy now once more!



Joc. Tell *me*, my King, in God's name, tell me too
What made so vast an anger rise in you?
Œd. I'll tell you. Madam, I prize you more than them.
'Tis Creon: his disloyal stratagem.
Joc. Speak! Can you not explain your grievance further?
Œd. He calls me guilty of King Laïos' murder.
Joc. Of his own cognisance or by hearsay?
Œd. Oh no! he sends a prophet rogue this way:
And keeps his own lips wholly out of play.

Joc. Now take yourself away from what you've said:
Listen to me, and learn of me instead.
No flesh and blood the prophet's gift can share;
A proof of that I briefly will declare.
Word came to Laïos—nobody avers
From Phœbus' self, but from his ministers,—
Such child as might be born to him and me
Should take his life: such was his doom to be.
Well, him for his part, common rumour says,
Strange robbers murdered at the Three Cross-ways.
The child, not three days from his birth yet run,
He pitched, first fastening his two feet in one,
(By hand of others) on a lonely hill.
Now neither did Apollo here fulfil
His doom to slay his father, nor the grim
Fate Laïos dreaded—to be slain by him.
See how these prophet-voices mapped it out!
Regard them not: what God will bring about,
Discovered due, such aids he'll work without.
Œd. What did I hear just now, my wife, to start
This reeling spirit in me—this heaving heart.



Joc. Why talk you so? What anxious thought can ail?
Œd. Laïos—yes, I think I caught the phrase,
Was murdered at a place of Three Crossways.
Joc. Yes, so they said: and so still runs the tale.
Œd. And where's the spot where fell this cruel case?
Joc. The land's called Phocis: at forked highways run
The Delphi and the Daulia road in one.
Œd. What length of time's expired since this took place?
Joc. Little before the time you rose to sit
Upon this throne, the crier published it.
Œd. O Zeus, what dost thou mean to do with me?
Joc. What cause for care, Œdipus, here can be?
Œd. Ask me not yet. Describe the man, his air,
The flower of what life-season did he wear?
Joc. Tall: first white bloom began his hair to strew.
In looks not greatly different from you.
Œd. Ah, wretch! I ran myself an hour ago
Into a grim curse, and I did not know!
Joc. What's that? My King, I gaze at you and start.
Œd. O grim misgiving! If the seer can see!
Say one thing yet, 'twill more enlighten me.
Joc. I start. Yet ask; I'll do my best to impart.
Œd. Whether he travelled few, or half a mile
Of men-at-arms for train, in royal style?
Joc. But five in all: a herald, one—at that;
And in the only carriage Laïos sat.
Œd. Good God! By now 'tis plain as day. But who
Came here to tell the tale, my wife, to you?
Joc. A slave, the sole survivor of the band.
Œd. Is he by chance now present and to hand?
Joc. Oh no! For when, returned from there, he found
Laïos dead and you successor crowned,



He clasped my hand, beseeching me to send
Him out afield, the flocks of sheep to tend,
Farthest removed from town and out of sight;
I sent him, for if slaves have rights, he might
Call even greater boon than that, his right.

Œd. How can we forthwith get him back again?

Joc. Quite well. But what do you expect to gain?

Œd. I fear myself, wife—and a tongue that ran
Too fast: that's why I want to see the man.

Joc. And come he shall: but, surely, I have too
The right, my King, to hear what ails with *you?*

Œd. I never will deny you: now my guess
Has pushed so far. In such a strange distress,
To whom more natural could I confess?
Corinthian Polybus my father was,
By Dorian Merope. I used to pass
For chief among the burghers of the place
Until a certain thing befel. The case
Was worth surprise, not worth grave thought of mine.
A man o'ercharged with liquor over the wine
At supper called me *feigned my father's son.*
And I was sore, but till that day was done
Hardly refrained, and went and brought to book
My parents on the morrow. And they took
It much amiss of him who shot the taunt,
And I was pleased with them. But it would haunt
Me, galling still: for word went all abroad.
Therefore, unknown to them, I took the road
For Pytho. Disappointed of my quest,
Phœbus dismissed me, but was manifest
In words grim, cruel, dismal, *I must mate*
With my own mother, raising (*such my fate*)



A race the world should not endure to see,
And murder him who had begotten me.
This when I'd heard (resolved no more to know
Of Corinth save by stars[27]), I turned to go
Where I might ne'er the accomplishment behold
Of all the shame that ill Response foretold.
And as I walked, just such a point I gain
As that where you describe the King was slain.
[*With growing agitation.*
My wife, to you I will confess, when near
These Three Crossways my journey brought me
—here—
Met me a herald, and another mounted
Upon a carriage, such as you recounted.
The old man and the guide who cleared his course
Offered to drive me from the road by force.
And I in fury caught the driver a blow
Because he hustled me. The old man though,
Watching until I passed him on the road,
From where he sat, brought down his two-pronged
goad
Fair on my head. Aha! but dear he paid!
One cudgel from this arm and quick! he's laid
Face upwards, tumbled from the carriage, clean!
I killed them all.
Now if he can have been,
This stranger, aught to Laïos akin,
Was ever man so marked with curse of sin?
Native or strange, forbid are all and each
To house me, no man may with me have speech,
But thrust me out. And 'twas no other man
But I myself laid on myself this ban.
The dead man's wife these hands of mine defile,



By which he fell. Was I created vile?
Am I not whole corruption? I must be
An exile, and exiled may never see
My own, nor tread upon my native land—
Or else be coupled with my mother and
Murder my father. Let one say, '*Twas fated*
Cruelty so; and is my case not stated?
Not so, pure worship of the Gods, not so!
Let me not see that day, but sooner go
Out of the world in darkness ere I see
Such blot of horror overtaking me!

L. of Cho. Sir, 'tis a frightful doubt: but do not ere
You hear the eye-witness of the fact, despair.

Œd. Ay, true. There's just this much of hope yet holds—
Just to await this fellow from the folds.

Joc. What's your desire of him when he's appeared?

Œd. I will inform you. Of the crime I'm cleared,
Suppose his tale be found with yours to agree.

Joc. What special point was this you heard from me?

Œd. Robbers you said that he reported—men—
Killed him. That number let him say again,
I killed him not: can several be the same
As one? but if one lonegirt man he name,
Then clearly towards me dips the deed of shame.

Joc. The word was published so, beyond a doubt;
He can't go back and strike that matter out:
The town was there, not I alone, to observe.
Yet should he from his former story swerve,
He proves not truly and duly brought to pass
Your murder of King Laïos. Loxias
Foretold in terms his death by child of mine.
Poor child! too soon he did himself resign

His life! he never was the murderer.
And so from now my eye I'll never stir
This way or that, for all the seers aver.

Œd. A sound belief. But send a man to hail
This man o' the field to come, and do not fail.

Joc. Let us come in—I'll send, nor wait to strike:
I would not do a thing that you dislike.





CHORUS.[28]

(*1st Turn.*)

I pray my luck in life be ever
To persever
Still devout in word and deed
Maintaining holy use, which stands for us decreed
In heavenly Testimonies
That travel aloft the air, skyborn, whose Father is
Olympus alone, and no creation of humankind.
Oblivion lacks the powër to fold
These in his slumber out of mind:
For a God is mighty in them, and ne'er grows old.

(*1st Counter-turn.*)

The Sin of Pride too high aspirant
Breeds a tyrant.
Wanton, after surfeitings
On profitless, unseasonable things,
To the extreme precipice
Pride mounteth on high, and down towards the dire abyss
He leapeth of Needs-must-be, where footing is none for feet.
I pray that God th' ordeal of old[29]
Happily waged, may not defeat.
Evermore my mighty defence the Lord I'll hold.



(*2nd Turn.*)

Whoso walks in high presuming
Or of handiwork or speech,
Nor standeth in awe of Justice,
Nor to sainted image bows;
Calamity catch him, dooming
Wretched pride to reck'ning sore—
Whose gains are not the gains of lawful treasure,
But after things impure must reach,
And all for handling things forbid his lust is.
Shall any man more
Boast his soul in proof to house
'Gainst the bolts of Gods defended?
Where such evil dealing goes not uncommended
Why tread we a measure?[30]

(*2nd Counter-turn.*)

Pilgrim never again I'll linger
By the holy Navel-Stone;[31]
No more the Abantian portal
Nor th' Olympian I'll frequent—
If pointing of all men's finger
Testify not *This fell true.*
Zeus! Potentate!—if rightly Zeus thou'rt hailëd—
Almighty, let this thing be known
To thee and thy dominion aye immortal!
The prophecy due
Wanes long since without event,
And they scoff at Laïos' story.
Nowhere shines Apollo magnified in glory:
And Worship is failëd.

Enter JOCASTA, *furnished for a sacrifice, and attended by waiting women.*

Joc. Lords of the land, there came to me the thought
To seek the shrines of godhead; I have brought
These chaplets in my hand with frankincense.
My husband's heart is flown in such suspense
Of vague uneasiness: a man of sense
Judges new things by old—*he's* mastered quite
By every speaker, if he speaks to affright.
So when I found no help in argument,
To thee, Lycean Apollo, I present
These intercessions—none so near as thou:
A pure deliverance to us allow.
For seeing *him* afraid we start and shudder;
Shipmates, but his the hand that guides the rudder.

Enter a foreign Shepherd as MESSENGER.

Mes. Strange Sirs, perhaps you can enlighten me
Where Œdipus' abode, the King's, may be?
Or better, if you know it—where is he?
Cho. Strange Sir, he is within—this house is his:
The mother of his children—there she is.
Mes. Blest be among surroundings blest your life!
Since by that consummation you're his wife.[32]
Joc. To you the same, Sir! For it is the due
Of such fair speech. But what request have you
Or news for errand?
Mes. Madam, 'tis a thing
Good for your house and lord, the news I bring.[33]
Joc. What may that be? From whom do you bring
us word?



Mes. From Corinth. It is news that when you've heard
Will please you, doubtless, yet may bring you trouble.

Joc. What is it? Can it have a force so double?

Mes. The people of the land will make him King
Of Isthmia—'tis the talk of the place I bring.

Joc. Old Polybus no more sovereign? In his room?

Mes. Far from it; Death's his master in the tomb.

Joc. What's that? Polybus dead?

Mes. He is: if I
Speak false, *I* ask no better than to die.

Joc. (*to her attendant*). Here, woman: run with utmost swiftness shod
And tell your master. Oracles of God,
See where you are! Him all this while in dread
Of murder Œdipus shunned; and now he's dead,
Not by his hand, but natural doom instead!

Enter Œdipus *from the Palace.*

Œd. Darling Jocasta, tell me, consort dear,
Why you have fetched me out and brought me here?

Joc. Listen to him, and judge you, listening, how
Apollo's precious oracles stand now!

Œd. But who is this? What does he want of me?

Joc. From Corinth. Polybus your father lives
No more—he's perished: that's the news he gives.

Œd. What's that? Strange Sir, your own informer be.

Mes. If I must first report upon that head,
Be well assured his place is with the dead.

Œd. By treason, or visitation of disease?

Mes. A touch of the scale sets aged bones at ease.



Œd. Poor man, it was disease—I understand?
Mes. Yes, and the lengthy date of years he spanned.
Œd. Well, well, my wife, why study any more
The hearth of Pythian divination, or
The birds that scream aloft! By them for guide
I was to kill my father! Now he's died!
—Deep under-ground! and here am I, my blade
Unhandled—unless it were my absence preyed
Upon his life: that would be *killed by me.*
Response and all, as such responses be,
He's lodged with Death, and they are vanity.
Joc. Did I not tell you of it long ago?
Œd. You did; but my alarm misled me so.
Joc. Take it no more henceforth into your head.
Œd. Must I not shudder at my mother's bed?
Joc. What should he fear who reckons Chance supreme,[34]
And all foreknowledge nothing but a dream?
Best live from hand to mouth, as best one might!
These bridals with your mother—take no fright
For them. Before now, many a man, in dreams
Slept with his mother. He to whom it seems
All nothing, has the life that's easiest led.
Œd. This were as soundly as 'tis boldly said,
Were not my mother living: till she's dead,
Well said or no, I still am bound to dread.
Joc. A great eye opens to us in his decease.
Œd. 'Tis great, I know. But while she lives—no peace.
Mes. This woman you so dread—who may she be?
Œd. Old man, 'tis Polybus' consort, Merope.
Mes. What is it causes you such dread in her?
Œd. A frightful oracle from Heaven, sir.
Mes. Communicable? Or not for other ears?
Œd. Oh, surely! Loxias foretold me, years



Ago, that I must share my mother's bed
And with these hands my father's blood must shed.
Corinth, my home, has called me absentee
On that account so long: best so, may be—
[*Looking full at* JOCASTA.
But oh how sweet to see your parent's face.

Mes. Was it this fear that made you shun the place?

Œd. And, sir, I wished no parricide to be.

Mes. Why have I not released you from this fear,
When 'twas to do you pleasure I came here?

Œd. Be sure you should not want your proper fee.

Mes. Well, to be sure, I chiefly came for it—
That your return might make me gain a bit.

Œd. Never! Return to meet my parents' touch!

Mes. My son, 'tis pretty plain you don't know much.

Œd. How so, old man? In God's name let me know.

Mes. If for their sake you shun home-coming so.

Œd. It is my fear that Phœbus may prove true.

Mes. Pollution from a parent fall on you?

Œd. Just that, old man, that frights me all day long.

Mes. Now do you know your terrors are all wrong?

Œd. How can I help it?—*They*'re my stock and stem.

Mes. You were nothing in blood, my son, to them.

Œd. He's not my father whom I took for such?

Mes. No more at all than I, but just so much.

Œd. No more? A father than a God-knows-what?

Mes. You're not by him and not by me begot.

Œd. What did he mean then when he called me so?

Mes. Gift from my hands he took you long ago.

Œd. Loved me so dearly—from another's hand?

Mes. Childless, he could not such appeal withstand.

Œd. By chance or purchase yours, you gave me then?

Mes. Found by Cithæron in a winding glen.



Œd. Why should you walk the region there at large?
Mes. The flocks at upland pasture were my charge.
Œd. A shepherd, just a menial serf—a stray!
Mes. Yes, and, my child, your saviour on that day.
Œd. A timely rescue? What amiss had I?
Mes. Two ankle-bones of yours could testify.
Œd. What trouble's this you hint at, so long ceased?
Mes. Sharp spikes transfixed your feet which I released.
Œd. What a reproach for birthmark was my share!
Mes. On that account they gave the name you bear.
Œd. Mother or father? In God's name, I beseech you!
Mes. I know not: he that gave you me could teach you.
Œd. Gave me? I was not yours by right of trover?
Mes. No: 'twas another herd did hand you over.
Œd. Who was't? Identify him if you can.
Mes. Oh, to be sure, he passed for Laïos' man.
Œd. That one who had, long since, these sovereignties?
Mes. Yes, yes; that is the one: the man was his.
Œd. And is he still alive—for looking at?
Mes. 'Tis you, his countrymen, should best know that.
Œd. Can any one of you who stand beside me,
To find this shepherd whom he speaks of, guide me,
From seeing him in the field or hereabout?
Declare! It is the time the truth were out.
Cho. The fellow from the field, I think 'tis he,—
The very man you sent before to see.
But, here! Jocasta knows as much as we.
Œd. Wife, is the man of whom you hear him speak,
The same as he we lately sent to seek?
Joc. Pay no regard. What matter whom he meant?
Refuse a thought to the tale—'twere vainly spent.
Œd. That is impossible—that with so much light
Gained, I should fail to bring my birth to sight.

Joc. In God's name—as you love your life—don't pluck
This secret out. (*Aside.*) Enough that I am struck.
Œd. Take heart! Though thrice serf to the third degree
I'm proved, proved baseborn you shall never be.
Joc. Yet listen, I beseech you: do not so.
Œd. I will not listen, and forbear to know—
Joc. 'Tis for the best I speak, in love's intent.
Œd. Oh, well! too long these for-the-bests torment.
Joc. Doomed! might you never guess your true descent!
Œd. Will no one bring this shepherd here to me!
Leave her to gloat on wealth and pedigree.
Joc. Poor wretch! poor wretch! This only I acclaim you,
And never otherwise hereafter name you.
[*Exit* JOCASTA.
L. of Cho. What is become of her?—In wild distress
Departed! (*They listen.*) Silence! and I fear to guess
In what bad sort this silence she will break.
Œd. Break as she pleases! I shall choose to take
Sight of my seed, though it be small. I make
No doubt—she's prouder than her sex—with scorn
And shame she looks on me as meanly born.
Myself to be the child of Chance I claim,
Of fair occasion: I will take no shame.
She is my mother: months who shared my birth
Mapped me a place with small and great on earth.[35]
Born such, I cannot now prove different,
That I should spare to follow my descent.



DANCE *and* CHORUS.[36]

(*Turn.*)

Art of the Seer to me is given,
Seer enough my wits I count!
Thou, in the name of yon heaven,
Thou, Cithæron Mount,
Thou shalt hear the secret soon,
Ere to-morrow's plenilune!
Glory to thee shall Œdipus
Render, thou art his, none other!
He shall hail thee nurse and mother:
True to his cause thou hast striven;
Dance and song accept of us!
O Phœbus, on whom we cry, to thee
Let it not displeasing be.

(*Counter-turn.*)

Who then of all the folk undying,
Who of them conceived thee, child?
Nigh to the Goat-god a-lying,
Pan that walks the wild?
Paramour of Loxias
Mothered thee? Across the grass
Lawn of the moorland oft he'll rove.
Did the master of Cyllene,
Or the Lord of Bacchant meiny
(Oft on the hill is he plying)
Take the jolly treasure-trove
From Nymph Heliconian, mates at play
Whom he most frequents alway?

Œd. If I, sirs, I, that never had to do
With him, may guess, I think there comes in view
Our long-sought shepherd. For he suits the span
Of age, and harmonises with this man;
Besides, I know his escort as my own
Household: but you who've seen the man and known,
Your certitude may well my guess outpace.
Cho. 'Tis Laïos' man—oh yes, I know the face—
Loyal as any, in his shepherd's place.

Enter a HERDSMAN, *guarded.*

Œd. You first, Corinthian stranger,—is this he
You mean? I ask you.
Mes. 'Tis the man you see.
Œd. You there, old man, just turn your eye this way,
And tell me. You belonged to Laïos, eh?
Shep. I did: no bought slave, homebred from a boy.
Œd. What livelihood, what task was your employ?
Shep. Most of my life I followed with the sheep.
Œd. What was the ground that you would chiefly keep?
Shep. Cithæron, there or thereabouts I'd wander.
Œd. This man—d'you know if e'er you knew him yonder?
Shep. As doing what? Nay, which is he you mean?
Œd. This, here. Was e'er a deal you two between?
Shep. No—that is—on the sudden—I forget.
Mes. And, Sire, it is no wonder. Only let
Me now remind forgetfulness. I know
That he knows well what time in lands below
Cithæron, he with two flocks, I with one,
Thrice we were neighbours till the term was run,



Six months from Springtime till Arcturus' fires.[87]
Then, winter come, my flock to fold retires,
And he to Laïos' farm with what he'd got;
Is there the fact in this, or is there not?

Shep. You speak the truth, but what a while ago!

Mes. Come, tell me now. D'you know that then you gave me
A child to rear, and as 'twere mine behave me?

Shep. What do you want—to search this story so?

Mes. That baby and this man here, my lad, are one.

Shep. Damnation!—Hold your tongue, man, and have done!

Œd. Heigh! Chide not him, old man; your own words give
More cause for chiding than his narrative.

Shep. For what, my good Lord, am I ta'en to task?

Œd. Not telling of the child: you hear him ask.

Shep. Ignorant talk—pains wasted to pursue it.

Œd. To please, you won't—but speak you shall and rue it!

Shep. No, no, for God's sake—do grey hairs no harm!

Œd. Let him be pinioned, quick! Some one—his arm!

Shep. Lord help me, why? What more is there to unmask?

Œd. Gave you the child to him? You hear him ask.

Shep. I gave it: would that I had died that day!

Œd. Oh, if you speak not right, 'twill lead you there!

Shep. Nay, much more I am lost if I declare.

Œd. The man 'tis clear is making for delay.

Shep. No, no, not I! *I gave*—have I not said it?

Œd. Whence got? Your own or had another bred it?

Shep. My own? Not I—the child was given me.

Œd. By whom in Thebes? And of what roof was he?



Shep. No! Sire, for God's sake, no! No further seek!
Œd. You're lost, if I shall ask you twice to speak.
Shep. Belonged to Laïos, if it must be said.
Œd. A slave, or of the royal lineage bred?
Shep. Ah, I am near to speak the frightful word.
Œd. And I to hear it: but it must be heard.
Shep. Yes, 'tis the truth: the child did pass for his.
Madam within can best say how that is.
Œd. She gave it to you?
Shep. Sire, indeed she did.
Œd. As for what purpose?
Shep. Kill it, I was bid.
Œd. The wretched mother?
Shep. Prophecies were grim.
Œd. Which?
Shep. That his parents should be killed by him.
Œd. Why did you give him to the old man there?
Shep. In pity, Sire: I thought he'd go elsewhere
And take the child to's home. But for the worse
He saved him. If you're whom he did declare,
Then doubt not, from your birth you bear a curse.
Œd. Ay me, ay me. And so 'twill all come true!
O Light, this hour's the last I look on you.
Proved misbegot, in marriage misallied,
And misadventured even in homicide.
[*Exit wildly.*

CHORUS.

(*1st Turn.*)

Such, such generation is
Thine, O man! as a nullity
All your life, I conceive it:
Where, where, is a man, O where,
Gets of fortune an ampler share
Than the seeming alone to wear,
Then the droop fro' the seeming?
Of thy Daemon a text I make,
Thee luckless Œdipodas, I take,
Human happiness all mistaken
Vanity deeming.

(*1st Counter-turn.*)

None drew such a bow as his!
Wealth's prime glory, to cull it he
Aimed, and straight did achieve it:
Zeus! fall to his hand we saw
That maid sorceress hook'd o' claw,
And when Death i' the land was law,
Then uprose he, a tower!
From which day you be called a King!
And highest honour of all to bring,
High Thebes came to the furnishing
Your sceptre o' power.



(*2nd Turn.*)
But after all
Who so sad to name as he?
With cruellest fall
Doomed in pains to congregate,
With life-in-overthrow to mate!
Ay me! O majestic Œdipus!
One broad harbour, one
Was for both a port,
Proved for sire and son
Matrimonial resort.
Tilth o' the field where ploughed the sire,
How could you serve the son's desire,
Never a cry, thus
For so long a season?

(*2nd Counter-turn.*)
In thy despite
Time, all seeing, traces thee.
He doth requite
The unnuptial nuptial bed
So long the breeder and the bred.
Ay me! Thou the child of Laïos!
Would that never my
Eyes on thee I'd set!
Now the deathbed cry
Loudly o'er thee living yet
Will I outpour. Yet truth is plain:
Thanks to thy help, I breathed again;
Slumbered my eye thus,
Thyself wert the reason.



Enter a MESSENGER *from within.*

Mes. Sirs, whom the land still honours in the extreme,
What deeds you'll hear, what sights, what grief
you'll find
Here, if so be you keep your loyal mind
Towards the house of Labdakos! I deem
That not the Phasis nor the Ister stream
Could wash this dwelling clean: such secrets lurk
Within, such dreadful voluntary work,
Unforced, it shall disclose. No foul affair
Pains more than such as wanton choice declare.

L. of Cho. Nothing of lamentable lacked the bad
We knew before: what have you more to add?

Mes. Well, soonest understood and soonest said:—
Her sacred majesty Jocasta's dead.

L. of Cho. Unhappy lady! What could be the cause?

Mes. Herself the cause. But oh, my tale withdraws
The saddest part of the matter—'tis not seeing!
Yet to the best of recollection, being
But what I am, I'll tell her piteous fate.
When in her angry mood she passed the gate
Straight forward to her bridal bed she bore:
No sooner entered in, she clapped the door,
And fell to calling Laïos, long since dead;
Mentioned an old-time seed, whereby she said
That he must die, and she be left alone
For miscreant engendering with her own;
Bemoaned the bed where fate had made her bear
Husband to husband, sons to sons, the pair.
How then she perished, that I cannot tell;
For in burst Œdipus with such a yell
As would not let us watch her anguish out,



But made us mark him as he roved about:
For up and down he begged a blade of us—
And where to find his wife—not wife!—who thus
Proved double field to grow him and his sons.
And to his madness one of the Heavenly Ones
Revealed her—none of us, we all stood by:
One leap against the doors—one ghastly cry—
As if he had the clue (God knows of whom!)
He buckled homedrawn bolts, and stormed the room!
There was the woman hanging, we could see,
Noosed in a bight of swinging cord. But he
No sooner sees, than with a frightful roar
He slacks the hanging knot. When on the floor
She lay—ah, then 'twas frightful to behold!
Her vesture-clasps, brooches of beaten gold,
He pulled from her (they deck her as she lies)
Uplifts and stabs the members of his eyes,
Shouting aloud, "*You shall not see me more,*
Nor all the wrongs I did, the wrongs I bore;
Henceforth in darkness see what's best unseen,
And leave unrecognised what should have been!"
To such a tune not once but many a time
He struck, lids lifted. His eyes, all blood, beslime
The while his cheek unceasing with an ooze
Of clotted gore, and all the while fell dews
Of drizzling blood, dark hail of bloody beads.
This woe was wrought of two: not one it needs
For victim, man and wife conjoint will strike.
Wealth? The old-time bygone state—that, if you like
Was proper wealth, but now upon this day
Doom, lamentation, death, dishonour—nay,
Names of all evils, none's to seek of these!

Cho. Poor wretch, and is he now at all at ease?

Mes. "*Display me, you*"—he cries—"*the doors fling wide,*
Display me to all Thebes, a parricide,



A mother's—" Foul! I cannot speak of it!
He'll hurl himself abroad, nor longer sit
Accursing, self-accurst, the house. And yet
He wants for strength, a guide he needs to get:
'Tis greater sickness than a man can brook.
But he will shew you: closèd portals—look!
Roll wide. (*The doors are opened.*)
A sight—you have not long to wait!—
A sight e'en loathing must compassionate!
[*Enter* ŒDIPUS, *blinded and disfigured.*

LAMENT: ŒDIPUS *and* CHORUS, *with overture in marching measure.*

Cho. O grim to the sight of a man, such pain!
None grimmer of all sights gaze yet of mine
In the world has found. O soul, full sad!
Did a frenzy assail? What ill angel's thine,
Who with a leap all fiends outleaping
Strikes hard thy days of disaster?
I cannot behold thee tho' ever so fain
Of thee to ask much, take thee to task much,
Eyes on thee keeping:
This shudder I still cannot master!

LAMENT.

Œd. Aiai! Aiai! How dismal am I!
Where now in the world am I moving? And where
Does it hover and scatter abroad, this cry?
O Fiend, what a leap was there!

Cho. To ends too dread for any eye or ear!



(*1st Turn.*)

Œd. Ay me, the dark—
Enveloping me horrible, voluble, unutterable!
O my inability! Windbound for aye!
Cry Woe!
And once more Woe!—jointly they penetrate,
Sting of my spikes and memory of my state.

L. of Cho. Yes, and no wonder if in this mass of care
Doubly you groan and double anguish bear.

(*1st Counter-turn.*)

Œd. Friends' voices!—hark!
Ministering loyally, true to me yet, indefatigable!
Can you so patiently beside the blind man stay?
Heigho!
You cannot baffle me—I recognise
Your voice despite the darkness of these eyes.

L. of Cho. O ghastly work! What made those hands so swift
To wreck your eyes? What Spirit could so uplift?



"Found by Cithæron in a winding glen."



(2nd Turn.)

Œd. Apollo it was, Apollo, good sirs!
Did amiss by me, thus amiss, cruelly, cruelly!
Though none but I, own-felon! dealt the blow,
poor wight!
Had I a use for sight
When seeing offered nothing sweet to see?

Chs. True, that was even as you say.

Œd. Much cause had I, much, to look;
Much to care for, or salute
My ear with sweet accost, good sirs!
Away with me, out o' the land with me, in haste,
in haste,
Up, away with me, O my friends! Damnèd
am I, disgraced.
Never a man so accurst; never had Heaven
a worse
Grudge on a man than me!

L. of Chs. Sad mind!—to match the stroke that has
o'erthrown you:
O how I would that I had never known you!

(*2nd Counter-turn.*)

Œd. Accurst, he that loosed from cruel fetterspurs
The waif of the wilderness! As a deliverer he
Rescued, recovered me from death—unkind!
Life had I then resigned,
Less misery to myself and mine I'd be!

Cho. Ay, would it e'en had gone that way!

Œd. Instead, my father's life I took,
Gained in all the world repute
For bridals whence my birth was—*hers.*
Now am I God-forsaken, iniquity-bred;
Bed of my birth was made into my marriage-bed.
Is there in bad yet a worst? Foul to more
foul defers?
Œdipus' it shall be.

L. of Cho. I know not how I can approve your mind:
Better to be no more than living blind.



Œd. That this is not the best that did allow
You need not school me and admonish now!
For with what eyes—I know not—could I brook
Down in the grave upon my sire to look,
And my poor mother—sinned against past hope
Of expiation by the strangling rope?
My children's looks, tho', could it fail to please,
Got where they got them, to contemplate these?
Ah, no! Ah, nevermore with eyes of mine!
Town, tower, and monumental form divine—
Never again! From all these things I stand
Self-barred, who knew no peer on Theban land,
Self-banned, a miscreant, I whose voice was loud
"*Reject the impious man, the heaven-avowed*
Impure!" And now my evidence has shewn
This blot on Laïos' house to be my own,
Must I have eyes with which to look on them?
Not that! Why, had there been a means to stem
The hearing fount in the ear, I'd not have spared
To lock up this unhappy flesh, prepared
For blindness and for hearing nothing. Sweet,
If, lodged apart, no griefs the mind could meet!
Why didst thou harbour me, Cithæron? Why
Didst thou not take and slay me straight?—that I
Might ne'er have published proof of whence I come.
Polybus! Corinth! The old house, called my home!



What festering mischief, glozed, in me you
nurst!
Now I'm declared the worst and born o' the
worst.
O Three Crossways, and O sequester'd lea,
Covert and pass, where meet the highways three,
You drank my blood from father's veins out-
poured
By these my hands! And can you still record
What acts I did, what acts I went to do
At Thebes thereafter? Nuptials, nuptials! You
Engendered me and then must breed again,
Sprout the same seed, and give to sight of men
Fathers, and sons and brothers; blood of kin,
Brides, wives and mothers—all the acts of sin
The most abominable a man can wreak!
But—things not good to do, are ill to speak—
Make haste in God's name, hide me from the
world.
Away, let me be slain, or seaward hurled,
Where never eyes of yours may see me more!
Come, deign to touch a man afflicted sore!
Consent, be not afraid!—My guilt and pain
None else but I am able to sustain.

L. of Cho. To Creon, now sole guardian of this nation,
Belongs the effecting and consideration
Of this request:—and here he comes at need!

Œd. What words have I to address him, what indeed?
What proper warrant can I now declare,
Base as I was to him in that affair?



Enter CREON.

Cre. Not as a mocker, Œdipus, I'm come
To make reproaches of that martyrdom.
[*To the* CHORUS.
But tho' of humankind you have no shame,
Respect the all-invigorating flame
Of our Lord God the Sun at least, and spare
Parading such pollution, nude and bare,
As Earth, and holy Rain, and Light of Day
Disowns! Make haste! Within the house convey!
Religion bids for eyes and ears of kin
Reserve the secret of a kinsman's sin.

Œd. Oh, since so noble visiting so base
Shocks expectation, in God's name a grace
I crave!—for your sake, not for mine indeed!

Cre. And what may be the want for which you plead?

Œd. Fling me abroad with all despatch you can,
Where I may perish far from speech of man!

Cre. That would I, doubt not, did I not desire
Before all else God's pleasure to inquire.

Œd. His word was manifest enough, I'm sure:
Cut off the parricide, the man impure!

Cre. This was so said: but, poorly as we stand,
'Tis better ascertain the God's command.

Œd. Ask a response about a man so low?

Cre. Even you will not dispute him now, I know.

Œd. Well. And I charge you—ay, I'll supplicate—
For her who lies within, to celebrate
Such funeral as you please: your right's ungrudged.

For me—let this my Thebes be ne'er adjudged
To have me for a living inmate. Rather
Let me abide in the mountains, where my father
And mother, living, destined me a tomb—
Yon hill called my Cithæron,[88] that my doom
May come from them who sought my death.
But still,
One thing I know: nor plague nor other ill
Must ever wreck me—else I'd ne'er escaped
When dying—till the ghastly doom be shaped.
But let my fortune take what path it takes.
Then, for my children—for the male ones' sakes
Urge no endeavour; they are men, and so
Want not for livelihood where'er they go.
But these poor girls, my tearful, cheerless pair,
Apart from whom my board was never set
To separate them from my person yet,
But still in all I touched they had their share—
Take thought for them. And let me, if I may,
Touch them, and weep together, weep away.
O Sir, allow this!
O gentle and generous! Touch them if I might,
I'd feel them mine as when I had my sight.
[*Enter* ANTIGONE *and* ISMENE.
What is it now? This—
O Heavens! No—it cannot be I hear
My sweet ones crying, dearest of my dear,
—Fetched hither to me by King Creon's kindness?
Inform my blindness!

Cre. You are informed! I with this boon have blest you
For this fond love I knew had long possessed you.



Œd. Good luck be yours, and for this errand's sake
The Spirit[89] for you a better guardian make
Than e'er for me. Where are you, children? Please
Come to these hands; they are your brother's. These
Have ministered to make these eyes, once bright,
Of your engendering sire have *this* for sight.
Because I would not look, I would not learn;
Where I was digged I fathered you in turn.
More tears . . . for you—to see you I've no strength—
To think of all the bitter coming length
Of life that now the world will make you live.
What gatherings or what festivals will give
You access, and you will not go away
Tearfully home instead of holiday?
And when you reach your bridal prime, oh then
Who will there be, my children, who of men
So bold to take upon himself the shame
Which blasts you as it blasts my parents' name?
What crime is missing here? Your father killed
His father, and the mother-ground he tilled
Where he himself was sown, and one and all,
Getter and got, have one original.
These will be your reproaches: who will marry?
Children, there will be none. 'Tis necessary
That you should wither barren and unwed.
Son of Menoeceus, in a father's stead
They've only you; for we are perished now,
The pair who gave them birth. Do not allow
Husbandless beggar waifs to bear your name;
And level not these girls to match my shame.



Ill does their age their piteous fortune suit;
But for your part, they're wholly destitute.
Give your assent, Sir,—touch me with your hand.
Children, were you of years to understand,
I'd give you much advice: now, just this prayer—
Manage to live as season may allot you,
And better luck be yours than his that got you.

Cre. Far enough in lamentation. Now within the house repair.
Œd. Choice is none, and yet 'tis hard consenting.
Cre. Fit alone makes fair.
Œd. Know you now the charter of my going?
Cre. Speak: to hear's to know.
Œd. Send me forth to dwell in exile.
Cre. What you ask must God bestow.
Œd. But of Gods I stand abhorrèd.
Cre. So shall you the boon obtain.
Œd. Say you Ay?
Cre. I like not speaking where I know my words are vain.
Œd. Well, 'tis time, you must remove me.
Cre. Come, and let the children go.
Œd. Rob me not of them, of them!
Cre. You must not think in all to reign.
Reign you had, and life is left you: honours proved a faithless train.

[*Exeunt* ŒDIPUS, CREON, *and the* CHILDREN, *while the* CHORUS *speak the Epilogue.*



Cho. O inhabiters of Thebè, look, for this is Œdipus,
He that guessed the great enigma, he of men all-glorious:
Him the people never envied, and he kept an eye on doom;
Yet what seas of ill engulf him, yet what awful waves entomb!
So until a mortal creature sees the final day of all,
Happy let him while he waits and watches no man living call
Till the homeward race has touched the barrier free from hurt or fall. [*Exeunt omnes.*



ŒDIPUS UP AT COLONOS

SCENE.—*The Hill of Colonos near Athens. A road from Left leads to the Sacred Grove of the Eumenides, which is fenced with natural rock: at some point in its circuit the rock affords a natural seat.*

Enter ŒDIPUS *and* ANTIGONE, *weary and travel-stained, by the road from L.*

Œd. Child of the old man blind, Antigone,
What lands are these? In whose domains are we?
Who shall to Œdipus the homeless waif
The daily churlish dole to-day vouchsafe?
Little enough I ask for, and I gain
Less than my little. Let me not complain.
Suff'ring and Time-old comrade now he's reckoned—
Teach patience: and noblesse is there to second.
But, child, if any place to sit be found
Whether in holy acre or common ground,
Set me and found me, while we ascertain
Our whereabouts. Strangers we come to ask
Of natives, and perform the bidden task.

Ant. Poor father, Œdipus, if sight be proof
The walls that case the town are far aloof.
But this is holy ground, as I suppose—
So rich the bay, the vine, the olive grows;



There chant within it nightingales thick-flown.
Here lay you down on this unpolished stone.
Long miles for aged limbs you've left behind.

Œd. Ay: settle me down here, and watch the blind.

[ANTIGONE *leads him to the seat and composes him there.*

Ant. 'Tis not Time's fault, if you must tell me that!

Œd. Say, can you teach me what's the place we're at?

Ant. Athens[40]—I know so much, but not the spot.

Œd. That much from every passer-by we got.

Ant. Well, shall I ask direction somewhere near?

Œd. Do so, child—if 'tis habitable here.

[*A Man of the Country is descried approaching quickly.*

Ant. Nay, better, 'tis inhabited. I doubt
We need not—for I see a man about.

Œd. This way approaching? He begins to move?

Enter the COUNTRYMAN.

Ant. Why, no, for now he's reached us! Speak you can
As best the hour advises—here's the man.

Œd. Friend, since a seasonable scout you prove,
Well met to clear our hesitations—she
Whose eyes do duty for herself and me——

C. Before you question further, quit that seat:
You're on forbidden ground for human feet.

Œd. What ground is this? To what God dedicate?

C. Inviolate, uninhabited, the site
Of dread powers, daughters of the Earth and Night.

Œd. Teach me to pray them! What's this name so great?



C. The KINDLY ONES[41] our people here acclaim
ALL-SEEING : place for place likes name for name.
Œd. In grace may they their suppliant receive !
This local seat I never more will leave.
C. What is this thing ?
Œd. The tally of my Fate !
C. Well, I myself am loth, unauthorised,
To move you, till I tell and be advised.
Œd. Disappoint not a vagabond like me,
In God's name, sir, of answer to my plea !
C. Make it but known—I'll disappoint you not.
Œd. Tell me, the ground whereon we are is—what ?
C. What I've to impart, you shall not be denied.
This place throughout is holy : in it abide
Awful Poseidon, and the Titan God
Fire-charged Prometheus; where you press the sod,
Is called the country's THRESHOLD BRAZENSHOD,[42]
The stay of Athens ; neighbouring acres boast
Yon knight Colonos[43] patron of their host,
And bearing every one Colonos' name
Make general addition of the same.
There, sir, you have the matter : in the telling
Less valued than with intimate indwelling.
Œd. So there are inmates of these purlieus, then ?
C. Why, surely ; the God's namesakes are these men.
Œd. Subjects ? Or with the people lies the word ?
C. By the King in town are we administer'd.
Œd. And who's this King whose writ and rod's all one ?
C. Theseus he's called : the old King Aegeus' son.
Œd. Could one of you to him go emissary ?
C. What to arrange for, and what word to carry ?
Œd. "That little help may gain a mighty prize."
C. What help is in a man with sightless eyes ?



Œd. The words I speak shall all be words of seeing.

C. Hark you, sir, how to make no blunder! Being
Gentle, as (save this act of God) you seem,
Bide here where first I found you—I'll to the dême
And tell our folks the matter, then and there,
—Not in the city. They shall now declare
If you may bide or back again retire.

[*Exit* COUNTRYMAN.

Œd. Child, is the Stranger gone, as we desire?

Ant. He's gone; so, father, you may now speak out
In peace, for none but I alone's about.

Œd. (*in attitude of prayer*). Dread-visaged Ladies, whenas your retreat
Proves in this land my first unbending seat,
O cross me not, and cross not Phœbus' will!
Who, while he prophesied me all that ill,
This resting-place in length of days bespake,
A final country reached, where I should take
Guest's lodging in the seat of Awful Powers;
There I must homeward turn my weary hours,
Settled a prize for them that domiciled me,
And curse upon my senders, who exiled me:
Signs there must come, in warrant of the same,
Earthquake or thunder, or the Almighty's flame.
Now I perceive that in this journeying
Doubtless 'tis your sure auspices that bring
Safe home to this your grove my roaming feet;
How else should you be first with whom I meet—
Abstemious with the wineless,[44] taking place
On this unaddiced awful floor? A grace,
O Goddesses! Apollo's voice confirm!
Give me a consummation and a term,
Unless you find me still too little worth,



Lackeying the highest torment known on earth!
Consent, sweet Daughters of th' old Dark!
Consent,
City that bear'st the name pre-eminent
Of Pallas, Athens prized above them all!
Pity this wretched phantom that they call
Œdipus, how unlike the original!

[*The* CHORUS *of old men of Colonos are seen approaching.*

Ant. Hush! here, I tell you, are men of ancient years
Coming towards your seat as overseers.

Œd. I'll hold my peace, and you my feet shall turn
Aside within the precinct while I learn
The purport of their words. In learning is
The circumspection of activities.

[*She helps him up the rock edge, and he disappears in the Sanctuary.*

Enter the OLD MEN *of Colonos: they scatter and search, singing—*

Cho. Look out! Was it—who? Where hideth he?
Where has he flitted apart to? Where abideth
he?
The arch-arch-unappeasable? (45)
Gaze right hard, peer for him!
Search, keep sharp ear for him!
A wayfaring old man, 'tis a wayfarer,
None born here! to approach the glades
Never trodden of man, the haunt,
Holy haunt, of the mighty Maids!
Speak not the name, avaunt!
Never a sound—a glance were sin here!



Devout souls full of reverence
Find speechlessly deliverance
While they pass it:[46]—and now be tidings
Sacrilege's within here.
Yet have I ne'er found tho' I spy all around
In the sanctu'ry ground;
I know not the place of his hiding.
[ŒDIPUS *discovers himself, slightly above them, within the precinct.*

DUET IN MARCH-MEASURE.

Œd. I am here, I am he:
By voice do I see, i' the phrase of the saw.
Cho. Oh! oh!
He's ghastly to see, he's ghastly to hear!
Œd. Judge me not, I plead, as a breaker of law.
Cho. Mercy on us, Zeus! What may the man be?
Œd. Mine is not all that a destiny can be,
Meet for a blessing, Lords of the regions.
Proof of it—how by these alïen eyes
Had I walked, otherwise—
Sheer-hulk on a tiny allegiance?

CHORUS.

Cho. Ay me! For the eyes blind to see!
Wast thou connately a creature of disaster?—
Full old too, to the best of guess.—
Ne'er tho', while help I can,
Shalt thou bring down the ban!
A trespass! a trespass! Very warily
Guard thy feet fro' the lawns o' grass,—
Silent places wherein the cup,



From sweet sources of honey drawn,
Runs with a welling-up
Fountain o' water. O be heedful!
Away, stranger, aloof! the path
Fends thee amply, O man of wrath!
Poor waif, in the woes that haunt thee!
If a word be needful,
If with me you have aught, yon sanctu'ry change
For the free common range,
Then speak: ere that tho' avaunt thee!

Œd. Child, which quarter of mind shall I make for?
Ant. Best to agree, sir, with the rule of the land,
Both hearken and yield where due is.
Œd. Handle me now then.
Ant. There! I touch thee.
Œd. (*hesitating*). O Sir! I pray no harm may be done me
When I come loyally yonder.

TRIO *sung by* ŒD. ANT. *and* CHOR. *during his descent.*

Cho. Nay, fear not at all, hence never shall hand
Force thee again, rudely to wander.

Œd. (*beginning to clamber down*). Advance?
Ant. Step it here, proceeding.
Œd. Again?
Cho. Set him onward, leading:
Thine, Maiden, it is to see.
[*She helps him down the broken edge, going herself before him and guiding his steps.*
Ant. Hither away, hither a sightless footing
Lift, father, and follow me.



Cho. Mind thee, O foreigner, comfortless,
In strange country be e'en as we;
Abominable our abhorrences,
Holy our law reputing.

Œd. Be a guide to me, dear,
Let us walk in the pathway of righteousness;
I will say my say, and obey their way,
The fight with necessity waiving.

Cho. Just so: bend not again steps beyond here,—
The bronze rock-semblance of paving.[47]
Œd. So?
Cho. Better obey my meaning.
Œd. Here sit?
Cho. A bit hither leaning.
Drop slant by the edge of rock.
Ant. It is for me, this: a foot to earth place
So, step to step gently lock.
Œd. Ah me! Ah!
Ant. Lovingly upon an arm of mine
The old rickety limbs incline.
Œd. O hard-hearted afflictions!
Cho. So rest easy, O weary heart:
Name thee now—of what human stock?
Who so calamitously led? Impart,
And let us hear thy birthplace.

Œd. O good sirs,
All homeless am I: refrain!
Cho. Nay—a refusal—old man, why?



Œd. No, no, no! Never ask my secret,
Nor question about me idly seeking!
Cho. What's this?
Œd. Born horribly!
Cho. Speak it!
Œd. Shall I— Child, child!—shall I tell them?
Cho. Of what seed gendered art, foreigner, fathered of whom?
Œd. O, my child, what is to become of me?
Ant. Tell it out: to the edge thou art driven.
Œd. Speak I will: power have I none left to conceal.
Cho. Ye are long with your loitering: haste thee!
Œd. Laïos' son do you know?
Cho. Oh! oh! oh!
Œd. And the children of Labdacus?
Cho. O Zeus!
Œd. Miserable Œdipodas?
Cho. So it is he?
Œd. Nay, be not alarmed at my story.
Cho. Oh! oh! oh! oh! Cursèd one! Oh! oh!
Œd. O daughter of mine, what awaits us?
Cho. Out, out! Forth, forth! Quit you the country!
Œd. And the warranty—how will ye keep it?

Cho. Never a destiny falls to requite the requiter of infamy done.
'Tis a fraud to a fraud and a like to a like, and the other a match for the one.
Not a grace to repay but a trouble to render: aloof from the land and away
From the holy retreat with a bound!

For I doubt, to my country's ground
No good thy touch will gender !

MONODY.[48]

Ant. Merciful-spirited sirs, here dwelling,
Tho' you could not abide to behold
Father—his blindness ; because Fame told
Those unpurposed acts he fell in,
Still, we beseech you adoringly, ear to my misery, mine—
Ear incline,—
Suppliant here in my wreck'd sire's cause to you,—
Cause that I plead with you, eye to eye gaze at you,—
Eyes not of blindness mine—e'en as if I were a
Vision of kindred aris'n to you—O let his
Woes find mercy ! on you as a God's will
Hang we in helplessness ; O by a miracle, yet be benign ! Give a sign !
O by the dearest of thine do I plead with thee,—
Child be it, wife be it, chattel or God be it !
Scan you the world, you shall never a man behold
Able to escape
Whenso God will lead him.

Cho. Daughter of Œdipus, be sure we take
Pity on both for your affliction's sake,
But pious apprehensions must withhold
From speaking further than what you've been told.



Œd. Ah! What forsooth does fair opinion boot,
And idle current of a good repute?
Athens they call a most God-fearing land,
Able alone to rescue, fit to stand
Protectress to the stranger's tribulation:
Where do I find it? From my sacred station
You dispossess me and rebuff me though:
Afraid of just a name, because I know
Not for my person nor my deeds you care,
More sinned against than sinning as they were;
—If I must needs of father and mother tell;
For this you fear me: that I know full well.
But how can I be naturally vile?
I did as done by: had I known the while
I acted, where's the vileness e'en in that?
But no: I reached the point I ended at,
Unwitting: *they* were wilful murderers.
Therefore in God's name I beseech you, sirs,
As you have dispossest me, so restore;
Make not the Gods, the Gods whom you adore,
To be of none account. Be this your creed:
Of good men in the world they take good heed,
Good heed of the evil-doer; when indeed
Did wicked men escape? I pray you, mark,
And blot not blessed Athens with a dark
Ministering to practices abhorrent:
You took me as a votary in your warrant,
Rescue me also and keep me. Do not see
With disregard the unsightliness in me.
Sacred I come and holy, and I bring
A blessing on these burghers. When your King
Arrives, the empowered spokesman of the rest,
Then while you listen all shall be confest.
Meanwhile be not unkind to my request.



Chorus Leader. These cogitations my alarm have raised,
And cause enough, old sir; no lightly-phrased
Announcement this; but I'm well satisfied
To leave it with our master to decide.
Œd. And where may be your country's arbiter?
Lea. In the Capital. The same observer hies
To fetch him, who my coming did advise.
Œd. And will he have regard, do you surmise,
Or care to come and meet with sightless eyes?
[*Lea.* O surely if he do but hear your name.
Œd. That word, to him who is there can proclaim?
Lea. The road is long; and every passenger
Sets rumour roving, and he'll hear the same:] (49)
Take courage; he will come. For, aged sir,
You are much noised abroad; let him but catch
Your name—dull ease will turn to quick despatch.
Œd. Luck for his realm and luck for me attend
His coming! Self's an honest man's good friend!

Ant. (*in great agitation, staring along the road R.*). Zeus, give me the word! O fix my thoughts for me!
Œd. What ails you, child, Antigone?
Ant. I see
A woman—she approaches us: she rides
A steed of Ætna; but her face she hides
Under a shady-brimmed Thessalian beaver. (50)
Heigho!
Is't YES or NO? Soul says—dare I believe her?
Heaven help me!

It is none other! Yes, with beaming eyes
Greeting me as she nears, she signifies
"Sister Ismene—'tis none else than she!"

Œd. What's that, my child?

Ant. My sister that I see!
Your child—and now her voice shall prove it you.

Enter ISMENE *as described, but dismounted. The horse does not appear.*

Ism. Father and sister, O the sweetest two
Names of accost! I've hardly the heart, for pain,
To look on you, so hardly found again!

Œd. O child, you're there?

Ism. O father! O martyrdom!

Œd. Child, you've appeared?

Ism. And work it was to come!

Œd. Handle me, child!

Ism. I touch you both as one.

Ant. O sister!

Ism. Two sad lives in unison!

Œd. Her life and mine?

Ism. I join the unhappy pair.

Œd. Why came you, child?

Ism. Father, in filial care.

Œd. Love longing?

Ism. I'm own-messenger as well
(With one sole trusty slave) of news to tell.

Œd. Your brothers, though—where's their hard-working prime?

Ism. They're where they are: for them 'tis no good time.

Œd. How they are shaped to the similitude
Of Egypt's manners,[61] in their life and mood!



That is the country where the males abide
Weaving at home; their helpmates must provide
The outdoor work that wins the daily bread.
They who should take their duty in your stead,
Sit like home-keeping damsels in the home,
While you for them accept the wearisome
Charge of my misery. One, since first she came
From child's estate to strength matured of frame,
Condemned to wait upon my aimless way,
Plays old man's nurse; and many a time astray,
Shoeless, unvictualled in the forest wild,
Oft vexed with rains and burning suns, poor child,
Counts life at home as but a second good,
"My father first must have his livelihood."
And you, my child, gave Thebes the slip before,
And reached me, bringing all the oracular lore
About this body of mine. A faithful guard
You've stood by me when I was banned and barred.
And now, Ismene, what's the tale you bring
From home? What errand set you voyaging?
You come not empty—that I know full well;
Some word of dread you will not fail to tell.

Ism. The rude mischances, father, I had to chance,
Seeking your whereabouts of maintenance,
I will let pass, for I desire not pain
Twofold, of effort and in story again.
'Tis of your luckless sons, their present sort
Of trouble, that I travelled to report.
'Twixt them and Creon there was first debate
To yield the crown and not pollute the state—
A strife of reason on the old blood-taint



Which grips your hapless house in such constraint;
But (God knows why, and their bedevilled mind)
Thrice wretched! now they're ta'en with strife less kind
To clutch at sovereignty and royal state.
The youthful one, that's born of lesser date,
Would oust the elder from the government;
And Polyneices is to exile sent.
But he, or so with us obtained the tale,
A banished man, at Argos in the Vale,
Accepts a match and banded kinsmen's shields—
"*Or Argos,*" thinks he, "*or Cadmean fields:*"
"*Throned conqueror—or my friends the heaven shall walk!*"
Father, this is no ciphering-up of talk,
But dreadful act. Which way the Gods will end,
Pitying your pain, I cannot apprehend.

Œd. Why, had you any hope the Gods would cast
An eye on me, and I be saved at last?

Ism. Yes, father; since the oracle replied.

Œd. What's this reply? Child, what's been prophesied?

Ism. Search after you your countrymen shall make,
Dead or alive, for their well-being's sake.

Œd. Whose welfare can depend on such as me?

Ism. They say you hold their royalty in fee.

Œd. Am I, a dead man, reckoned among men?

Ism. Yes, now the Gods upraise, who wrecked you then.

Œd. Fall'n in my prime—upraised in eld—what profit?

Ism. And Creon, I can tell you, comes anon—
No world-without-end waiting—bent thereon.

Œd. Interpret, daughter—what's the purpose of
Ism. To have you planted near their land, and ye
Safe-held, no foot within the marches set.
Œd. Placed at their gates?—What good is thei
this?
Ism. 'Tis their affliction if your grave's amiss.
Œd. So wit may guess, and take God's word on t
Ism. Therefore they like you not at large, but w
Adopt you nearly to their neighbourhood.
Œd. And lay me in the shade of Theban dust?
Ism. Intestine blood?—No, father, it could not b
Œd. Then they shall not possess themselves of n
Ism. Then heavy shall be Thebes' punishment.
Œd. Daughter, in what conjuncture of event?
Ism. Your anger: when they form beside your g
Œd. (*after a pause of meditation*). Whence had you h
the tidings that you gave?
Ism. A Mission from the Hearth of Delphi came.
Œd. Phœbus himself did so of me proclaim?
Ism. Such was the message brought to Theban la
Œd. Did any of my sons so understand?
Ism. Ay, both alike, and learned the lesson well.
Œd. And then the scoundrels, after all they'd he
A kingdom to their love for me preferred?
Ism. 'Tis painful telling, yet I needs must tell.
Œd. O that the Gods may never quench that fei
Predestined, and O that I were endued
With power to rule their issues, in this figh
They hanker after and set spears upright;—
That neither may the one abide who held
Sceptre and sovereignties, and that the expel
Come home no more! When I was thrust a
Thus foully from my home, they would not



Nor succour him that got them : dispossest
They let me go, a vagabond profest.
You tell me " so was then supposed my pleasure,
Well might the State approve a gracious measure " :
Oh no ! for, look you, on the very day
And instant when my boiling spirit could pray
For nothing else but to be stoned and die,
Then to abet my passion none was nigh ;
But late, when pain was grown to mellowness
And I began to feel that heat's excess
Had proved chastiser ev'n beyond the crime,—
Then was it that the people, late in time,
Thought to exile me by compulsion ; then
When father's sons were father's hope, these men
Refused the endeavour, and for one word's sake [52]
Saw me, an outlawed foreign beggar, take
The wanderer's road. For family comfort, food,
And charter of rest (so far as aptitude
Of Nature serves) these girls I have to thank.
They chose instead of me, their parent, rank
And royal sway, the sceptre and the throne.
But never shall they count me for their own
To help them ; never of their Cadmean reign
Shall blessing come : I know it, schooled again
By her report of the oracles, and schooled
By thinking out what long since Phœbus ruled
Should be my doom. So now they may despatch me
Creon and all their mighty men to catch me.
[*Turning to the* CHORUS.
For, sirs, if you will please with these divine
Grave Patronesses [53] of the place combine

To make a brave defence, your State shall gain
A mighty helper, and your foemen pain.

L. of Cho. Right worthy, Œdipus, of our compassion,
You and these girls! But now that in this fashion
You introduce yourself our people's saviour,
I would advise you of a due behaviour.

Œd. Sweet friend, be minister, and I'll perform.

L. of Cho. Offer atonement to the Powers whose sod,
Your earliest entertainers, you have trod.

Œd. What is the manner of it? Sirs, inform.

L. of Cho. First with the touch of holy fingers bring
Ritual draught from ever-flowing spring.

Œd. And after I the unsullied flood have got?

L. of Cho. Bowls you will find, of master's handicraft:
Wreathe round the brow and mouthpiece fore and aft.

Œd. With blossoms or with yarn of wool, or what?

L. of Cho. Put the new-shorn fleece of a yearling ewe.

Œd. So be it: after that what must I do?

L. of Cho. Pour a libation facing prime of dawn.

Œd. Drink, in the vessels that you speak of, drawn?

L. of Cho. Three streams, I tell you; and the last entire.

Œd. Put full of what, this last? I must inquire.

L. of Cho. Water—the Bee—but no strong liquor add.[54]

Œd. And when black-leaf'd earth hath such tribute had?

L. of Cho. With both your hands put thrice nine branches down
Of olive, and with prayers your offering crown.

Œd. 'Tis these I fain would hear—they are the chief.

Cho. *Kindly we call them, that they yield relief*

With kindly bosoms to their votary:
Pray this, yourself, or else by deputy,
Unheard in utterance—raising no loud cry;
Then go, but never turn about.[55] And I
Will gladly be your friend if so you do;
Else, stranger, I'd be ill at ease for you.

Œd. Children, d'you hear these worthies of the land?

Ant. We heard: 'tis yours our action to command.

Œd. I cannot foot it, being handicapt
With feebleness and blindness, twice unapt.
Go, one of you, see to the accomplishment.
One soul may in such office represent
Ten thousand, with goodwill, as I believe.
Only make haste to act, and do not leave
Me solitary: too weak my limbs would prove
Alone without a guiding hand to move.

Ism. Then I'll go celebrate. But first I ask
Where shall I find the place to do the task?

Cho. Beyond the grove here, mistress. Should you lack
For aught, the keeper'll put you on the track.

Ism. I'm going. You, Antigone, must mount
Guard on our father: children may not count
Toil toilsome on such dutiful account.

[*Exit* ISMENE.



DUET: ŒDIPUS *and* CHORUS.

Cho. Although dreadful it is,
Sire, to arouse,
Laid misery's
Late reappearing,
Mine ear is enamoured of hearing.
Œd. What mean ye?
Cho. That anguish, desperate ere discovered,
Which cruelly did waylay thee.
Œd. Kind host, never ope, I pray thee,
Those merciless hurts I suffered!
Cho. Why rumour's abroad ceaselessly preaching:
I'd fain learn truth o' the common story.
Œd. Oh! oh!
Cho. Listen to beseeching!
Œd. O grief.
Cho. Consent: I too did accord what thy prayer pled.

Œd. Most foul sins did I bear;
—Not that I chose—
Burden they were
Dealt me, God knows it!
Of none can ye say that I chose it.
Cho. The case though?
Œd. To bond most impious—all unwilling—
Of marriage a folk did hold me:
Cho. With motherly—so they told me—
Mis-bridal your bed fulfilling?
Œd. Ah me! 'tis a death while he rehearses!
These girls this couple are of me gendered—
Cho. How say'st?
Œd. Rather a couple o' curses!—
Cho. O Zeus!
Œd. —From selfsame motherly pang as I were bred



Cho. They're *thy* progeny, then—ay, but yet . . .
Œd. Blood-sisterly to who did beget.
Cho. Alas!
Œd. Alas! troops of ills enough engage me thousandfold.
Cho. Sufferer! . . .
Œd. O' suffering I'm adept!
Cho. A sinner. . . .
Œd. Oh! no sinner!
Cho. . . . Aha?
Œd. I did accept
Guerdon o' services: oh that I ne'er had had
Their choice reward! O misery never ending!

Cho. Unfortunate—eh? A murderer. . . .
Œd. What mean ye? Will ye yet ask me, sir?
Cho. . . . Of father?
Œd. Ah! Wounded once again!
New malady on the old!
Cho. A felon. . . .
Œd. A felon: and yet as well—
Cho. What say you?
Œd. I can plead that . . .
Cho. That . . .? Eh?
Œd. I now will tell:
They that I slew would have else made an end o' me;
So clear i' the law I sinn'd, unapprehending.



Look! Theseus, Aegeus' son, I see appear
To test the promise of his errand here.

Enter THESEUS, *attended.*

The. I've heard (for long since rumour did apprise)
Of the ensanguined havoc of your eyes:
I knew you, son of Laïos—and to-day
Still more from all I've heard upon my way.
This habit and this doleful person both
Declare you for yourself: I am not loth
To ask, poor Œdipus, in pity what
Petition for the land and me you've got,—
You and the poor companion suppliant there.
Inform me. Grim in truth must be the affair
That you could name, to make me stand averse:
I mind I too was bred with foreigners,
Abroad; in my own person not a few
Venturous bouts enough have I been through.
So I will never from a stranger's face
Turn (such as now are you) to grudge him grace.
I know myself for man: on days beyond
To-day, nor you nor I have any bond.

Œd. Briefly absolved by your great-heartedness,
Theseus, I need to tell you all the less.
You rightly name me, who I am, and name
My father and the land from whence I came:
So there is nothing left me to be said
Except my wish, and then the talk is sped.

The. Just that, for me to learn, you must express.

Œd. I come this wretched carcass to bestow
On you; of little worth in outward show,
But yielding gains to outmatch the comeliness.

The. What is this gain your visit claims to bear?



Œd. Time—not, I think, the present—will declare.
The. To this accession what shall testify?
Œd. Your burying of me when I shall die.
The. You ask the last of life; days that precede
You have forgotten, or you do not heed.
Œd. Because in the one the rest is all conveyed.
The. 'Tis slight enough, the favour that you've prayed!
Œd. Ah! look you well! No petty cause is this!
The. You mean your children's and my destinies?
Œd. They now coerce me thither to remove.
The. Ill suits your exile when they disapprove.
Œd. When 'twas my pleasure they would not concede.
The. O foolish! Temper ill assorts with need.
Œd. When you have heard, advise! Till then, refrain.
The. I must not speak without my book. Explain.
Œd. Foul usage upon foul has been my fate.
The. Will you the old ruin of your house relate?
Œd. No, no! that's buzzed in Hellas far and wide.
The. What superhuman plague of yours beside?
Œd. My case is this: I was despatched to roam
By my own seed; and ever to come home
I am forbidden as parenticide.
The. But if you're fetched how can you dwell apart?
Œd. The mouth of God perforce will turn their heart.
The. What mischief do the prophets bid them fear?
Œd. Doom that ordains they must be beaten here.
The. 'Twixt them and me what sour could interfere?
Œd. Sweet son of Aegeus, to the Gods alone
Eld comes not and the turn to die's unknown:
All else does Time the omnipotent confound.
Strength of the body wastes and strength of ground;
Perishes faith, unfaithfulness is rife:



And nowhere steady sits the wind of life,
'Twixt friend and friend, from nation towards nation.
Or late or soon, for each his alteration,
Sweet turns to bitter and again to kind.
Tho' now in your regard the Theban mind
Is all fair-weather, Time he goes his ways
And myriad Time breeds myriad nights and days,
Wherein to-day's harmonious bond they'll scatter
With steel, upon pretence of little matter:
Then time shall be, my body, covered up
At rest and cold, of their hot blood shall sup;
If Zeus be still Zeus and his Son be true.
I like not blabbing holy secrets. Do
But let me be where I began, maintain
Your plighted honour; you shall not complain
That you received a useless refugee
In Œdipus, if Gods keep faith with me.

Chorus Leader. This promise and the like of this he still
Assures the land, O King, he will fulfil.

The. Kindness in such a quarter who'll disown?
Not mutual hearth and comrade ties alone
Unite us ever, but his visit is
A pilgrim's homage to the Goddesses,
And to the land and me pays no small dues.
All this respecting, I will not refuse
His grace, but of the country plant him free.
If here the stranger has a mind to be
I will appoint *you* guardian:—or set on
(If that's your pleasure) Œdipus, with me.
Choose freely: I will go the way you've gone.

Œd. O Zeus! may such as he be prosperous!

The. But what's your will? Set on for home with us?



Œd. Had it been granted me! But here's the spot—
The. Where what must be? I will gainsay you not.
Œd. Where I shall vanquish them that cast me out.
The. Great prize of your abiding, this, no doubt.
Œd. If you're steadfast your promise to fulfil.
The. Here stands a man of honour: that I will.
Œd. I will not bid you swear, like rogues, for bond.
The. No, it were but a verbal tie beyond.
Œd. What will you do then?
The. What d'you tremble at?
Œd. There will come men—
The. These here will see to that.
Œd. Look, you forsake me—
The. Teach me not my part!
Œd. I needs must, trembling—
The. Mine's no trembler's heart.
Œd. Their threats you know not—
The. One thing I can say:
In my despite none carries you away.
Oh, threats have often threatened loud in vain
And long in anger; let the mind regain
His self-control, and threatenings, where are they?
Heartened they may have been, no doubt, to say
Dread things of carrying off: I know they'll find
Long seas between, to navigate unkind!
And mind you, Phœbus (my resolve apart),
Speeds you—I justify a cheerful heart;
And even in the absence of my arm
My name will warrant that you take no harm.

[*Exit* THESEUS.



(*Turn.*) CHORUS.

Rest here, friend: for the Land of Horses
Knows no better abode in all the region,
The white mound o' Colonos, where
Nightingales of a choice repair,
With sweet melody murmur'd soft in
Fresh green copses abounding;
The flushed ivy she keeps aloft in,
Thick-set bosky surrounding
Haunts o' the God where the berries are legion!
Never a wintry wind dishevels
Bacchus' close, never hot sun forces
These shy swards where he loves to lead the revels,
Nymphs to nurse and to tend his courses!

(*Counter-turn.*)

Day by day where a cream of dews is
Shed, narcissus erects a lovely cluster;
Long since used for a coronal
Wreathing Mother and Maid withal.
Here beam rays o' the crocus golden;
Here unslumbering waters
Each day range ever unwithholden,
Old Cephisŏs' daughters.
Swift to creation, he runs with a lustre
Got of the raindrops unpolluted
O'er a bosom of lands, the Muses
Love and leave i' the dance not unreputed,
And golden-rein'd Aphrodite chooses.



CONTEST OF ATHENA AND POSEIDON FOR THE ATTIC LAND



From a Vase in the Hermitage Museum at S. Petersburg.
5th Century B.C.

p. 89



(*2nd Turn.*)

There's one glory o' these
Fields, of all fields
Known to my hearing
Which not Asia yields:
Peloponnese'
Broad heritance
Boasts not a rearing:
Th' uncultivated
Plant, self-created;
The terror of the foeman's lance;
They fill the ground in
A rich abounding—
Grey-greenleaved olive-trees,
Lusty to nourish:
Which youth enraged
And captain aged
Vainly strives to reduce,
Hacking amain:
Havoc is vain,
For the eye of Zeus
Watches aye and wi' steely glance
Pallas sees that they flourish!

(*2nd Counter-turn.*)

Once more, Mother o' Towns,
Praise be rehearsed,
Title of honour!
No mean Deity erst,—
Crown of her crowns,
Pride o' the place—
Laid this upon her:
Renown for oarscraft,
For steeds and horsecraft.
O Son of Cronos, by the grace
Of thee, Poseidon,
She puts this pride on:
These our streets were the first,
Here did he render
The Horse not idle
By Bit and Bridle.
And our oarages leap
Peerlessly mann'd
Over the deep,
Fitted apt to the hand;
Five-score-footing, a Mermaid race
Takes our bark for a tender!

Ant. O region highly magnified in praise,
'Tis time to illustrate the glorious phrase!
Œd. Why, child, what news?
Ant. O father, Creon 'tis
Approaching, and a troop of men of his.
Œd. My well-beloved Signiors, now the sun
Of my deliv'rance from your hands must come!
Cho. Old as I am, it shall not fail: be bold:
Here is folk whose force is not grown old!
[*Enter* CREON, *attended by a few men.*
Cre. Sirs, and most noble denizens of the land,
Some fear of my advance, I understand,
Takes instant hold upon your eyes. Forbear
Your trembling, and the untoward greeting spare.
I come not hither as on action bent,
For I am old, and this your government
For power I know may match the best in Greece;
Thus old, my mission is by ways of peace
To bring this man back to Cadmean ground,
On no one man's commission, rather bound
On public errand, as by birth a chief
Mourner in all the nation at his grief.
And now consent, unhappy Œdipus,
Come home: the voice of Thebes unanimous
Recalls you duly: I, not least, recall—
For (were I not the vilest wretch of all)
I suffer at your sorrowful old age,
To see this doleful foreign pilgrimage,—
A hungry waif for ever, penniless,
With one to lead him: little did I guess
To such abjection she would fall away
As fall'n, poor soul, I find her—day by day
To you and your condition ministrant



With beggar's cheer: of age, uncognizant
Of marriage—left for who may pass and please
To ravish. Bad enough reproaches, these,
Wherewith I have reproached myself and you
And all our house? Broad day leaves all to view:
Œdipus, by our fathers' Gods, comply!
Keep secret, and consent to occupy
Your house and home, and bid a kind good-bye
To Athens—she deserves it. Home must hold
First place in worship: 'twas your nurse of old.

Œd. O wholly unabashed! O glib to gain
From any plea of right some sly chicane!
Why do you probe me thus, and try once more
To take me in the toils I'd most deplore?
First, when I was distempered with my own
Afflictions, and I yearned to be alone,
Outlawed; the grace I could not then obtain.
I had my bellyful of rage—was fain
To live at home; oh no! 'twas next your cue
To thrust me out—disown me: much did you
Care then for this your plea of kith and kin!
Once more you find me here, adopted in
The loving league of all this realm and race
And now you try to tear me from this place
With cruel soft-speaking. Love me when I
will not—
What joy is that? As tho' one should fulfil not
Your suppliant's prayer, nor do you any good:
And w' 'n you're full of all the things you would,
With graces grown ungracious then endow.
Would you not find the favour empty now?
Yet 'tis the like of that you proffer to me,
Blessings in word that shall in act undo me.

They too shall hear it—so I'll prove you wretch.
You're come to fetch me, but not home to fetch,
Only to plant me few fields off, and clear
Your state scot-free of any crosses here.
That cannot be, sir: *this* you have in store—
My vengeful Genius lodged there evermore:
And all the inheritance my sons shall win
In lands of mine is just to die therein.
Which, you or I, best knows this Theban matter?
Oh, that I do: my teachers do not flatter—
Phœbus, and Zeus himself, that's Phœbus' sire.
Your lip's edge, file it to your heart's desire,
Comes with a changeling temper: all your talk
Shall little serve to bless and much to baulk.
Nay, but I need not think to move you—out!
And let me here abide—ill off, no doubt;
But joy has little to repine about.

Cre. Do you suppose that it is I come worse,
Or you yourself, sir, out of this discourse?

Œd. I am well pleased enough: you lose your labours
In neither moving me, nor these my neighbours.

Cre. Poor man, you'll prove not even Time can give
You wits! the scandal of grey hairs you live!

Œd. You're sharp of tongue. I know no man so pat
On all occasions, but's a knave at that.

Cre. *Speak much* from *speak to the point* is far apart.

Œd. The brief but pointed, pray is that your art?

Cre. Not to the like of your intelligence.

Œd. Cease (I will use their name to bid you hence)
Blockading my predestined residence.

Cre. They are my witnesses, not you: I'll make you
Learn civil answers, if I once can take you.

Œd. Who takes me if my champions here oppose?



Cre. Oh, we have other means to vex than those!
Œd. Where is the deed that spoken threat to match?
Cre. One child of yours I did but now despatch
Arrested; soon I'll seize the other one.
[ŒDIPUS *utters a groan.*
You soon shall have more to lament upon.
Œd. You have my daughter?
Cre. This one too, anon!
Œd. O friends, what will you do? Will you betray?
Will you not drive this miscreant away?
L. of Cho. Stranger, begone at once! No right have you
In what you have done or in what you do.
Cre. My men! high time for you to make her budge
By force, if she will not consent to trudge.
[*They lay hands on* ANTIGONE.
Ant. Oh, I am lost! Where can I turn without
God's help or man's?
L. of Cho. Sir, what are you about?
Cre. She's mine, I say! I do him no despite.
Œd. Lords of the land!
L. of Cho. Stranger, you have no right!
Cre. I have a right.
L. of Cho. What right?
Cre. For my own to fight!

TRIO: ŒDIPUS, CREON, *and* CHORUS.

Œd. O People, hear!
Cho. Desist, Prince, desist!
She shall be released!
Or else arms be test!
Cre. Avoid!
Cho. Not from you!
Such are the deeds you do!



Cre. Hurt me, and you've a quarrel with my land !
Œd. Did I not tell you how 'twould be ?
L. of Cho. Unhand
The girl at once !
Cre. Play master where you may !
L. of Cho. Let go, I say !
Cre. And I say, Go your way !

Cho. Advance, make a stand !
Advance, men of the land !
This is a People's fall !
Here we be outraged all !
Advance, lend a hand !

Ant. I'm haled away, I'm ruined ! Sirs, good sirs !
Œd. My child, where are you ?
Ant. Dragged by ravishers !
Œd. Reach me your hands, my child !
Ant. I can't get free !
Cre. (*to his men*). Why can't you take her off ?
[ANTIGONE *is carried off.*
Œd. Ay me, ay me !
Cre. Ha, ha ! on those two staves no more you'll rest
In your wayfaring. Since you choose to best
Your country and your kindred (whose decree
I have for warrant, sovereign tho' I be)
Best them ! In time, I know it, you will learn
That you have done yourself a sorry turn
To-day, and when you flouted them before
To please the temper that's your standing sore.
[LEADER OF CHORUS *arrests* CREON.
L. of Cho. Hold hard, sir !
Cre. Keep your hands from me, my Lord !



L. of Cho. I'll never let you go till they're restored.
Cre. With heavier ransom yet you shall atone:
I'll take possession not of them alone.
L. of Cho. What's now your move?
Cre. To take him and be gone.
L. of Cho. Outrageous word!
Cre. It shall be fact anon.
L. of Cho. Unless he shall prevent, who rules the land.
Œd. On me, O foul tongue, will you lay your hand?
Cre. Silence! I bid you.
Œd. May these spirits dread
Not leave me speechless ere this curse be said!
Ruffian, tear from me this defenceless eye (56)
After my former eyes were lost, and fly?
Now may the Sun, the God all-seeing, give
Such life to you and all your house to live
Hereafter, as was my life, when you're old!
Cre. You people of the place, do you behold?
Œd. Ay, they behold us both, and they can see
I have but words to avenge your torts to me.
Cre. No! I'll not check my heat—although alone,
I'll hale him, slow with time although I'm grown.

TRIO: ŒDIPUS, CREON, *and* CHORUS.

Œd. O mercy me!
Cho. O proud, haughty heart—
Who dared plan the part,
And thought safe to achieve!
Cre. I do!
Cho. We're no more
A people, I'll believe!

Cre. Little has vanquished great when Right so willed.
Œd. Hear you what boasts!
Cho. They shall not be fulfilled.
Œd. I know it.
Cre. Zeus, no doubt, not you, can know!
Cho. O outrage!
Cre. Outrage—you must take it tho'!

Cho. Oho! People all!
Oho! Chiefs! oho!
To the defence I call:
To the defence!—too slow!
Away safe are they!

Enter THESEUS, *in haste.*

The. What's this outcry? What's the matter? What can be this great alarm
Made me by the Sea-god's altar stay my sacrificing arm,
By the altar of the patron of Colonos? Speak the case,
Why I hied me quicker here than suits the pleasure of my pace?
Œd. Dear friend, for your accost I recognise,
This man does foully o'er me tyrannise.
The. What acts of force? And who was he did wreak?
Œd. This Creon (you behold him) makes away
With my two children, robs my only stay.
The. What's that?
Œd. The plain truth of my wrongs I speak.



The. Then let some lackey run and not be long
To yonder altar, and make all the throng,
Horsemen alike and horseless, quit the rite,
And post, off reins, where thoroughfares unite,
Their avenues debouching,—there were best—
And let the maids not pass ! Else to my guest
I'm made a laughing-stock, forced, foiled at whim!
Quick, to my hest ! Despatch ! And as for him—
Did but my passion equal his desert
I had not let him 'scape my hands unhurt :
Now to such covenant shall he be plied,
As he came here observing—none beside :
(*to* CREON). You shall not leave this land of mine before
You fetch these maids and to my sight restore ;
For little worthy is this act you planned
Of me, and of your race, and of your land.
Into a commonwealth where men profess
Justice, a government of lawfulness,
You come, intruding, cut our laws adrift,
At your good pleasure levy, loot, and lift ;
As slavish or dispeopled rank my state,
My person at a cipher's purchase rate.
And surely 'tis not Thebes that schooled you rogue :
To breed lawbreakers is no Theban vogue,
And she would not commend you if she knew
This robbery on the Gods and me—that you
Harried the suppliant worship of the weak.
Footing on land of yours were I to seek,
Not (tho' I boasted ne'er so just a cause)
Without the magistrate who gives your laws,
Would I have haled and harried ; I'd have known



How men behave in countries not their own.
You stain an undeserving state with crime,—
You foul your own nest: plenitude of time
Leaves you an old man and an empty head.
I say it now as I before have said;
Let some one fetch these maids without delay,
Unless you like, perforce, unasked, to stay
Here in the country domiciled; and, mind,
The tongue that speaks it has a will behind.

L. of Cho. So, stranger, do you see your case? By birth
Gentle, you let your acts belie your worth.

Cre. Not that I count your people (as you profess),
O Son of Aegeus, silly or spiritless,
This deed I've executed, but because
No ground between us of dispute there was,
That they in my despite should keep my kin.
Parenticide (I knew it), man of sin,
They'd not receive,—the man to whom a match
Of filthy issue had been shown to attach.
Such seat of safe decree,[67] I knew they had
On Ares' Mount implanted, which forbad
Such vagabonds their country's lot to share:
Whereby assured, my game I went to snare,—
And had not done so, if he had not first
Me and my house with bitter curses curst.
Then I presumed to render tit for tat.
Ill-temper—ah, there's no old age for that
But death! Upon the dead no pains can seize.
So you shall do according as you please,
For destitution, 'spite my righteous pleas,
Renders me puny; have your way, and yet
Tho' old, I'll try to give as I shall get!

Œd. O spirit inhuman, who insult so much,



Am I or you the butt you think to touch?
My murder and my marriage—glibly slips
My story of misadventure on your lips:
The involuntary burden of my fate,
God-sent, in wrath, I doubt, of ancient date.
For, in myself, reproach you can descry
None of transgression, fit to justify
My so transgressing 'gainst myself and mine.[58]
For teach me: if oracular doom divine
Came to my father by his sons to die,
How can you make reproach with me to lie,
When natal germs of father I had not
Nor mother yet, but still was unbegot?
If, come, disastrous as I came, to light,
I killed my sire, encountering him in fight,
The man mistaken and the thing unmeant;
Can I be blamed for acts without the intent?
My mother's marriage too, you have no shame,
Your sister though she was, to make me name,
A marriage—nay, 'twas you that did advance
(I'll not be burked) to this foul utterance:—
She bore, she bore me—horror!—guiltless she
As I was guiltless, and she mothered me,
Bore children to me of her own disgrace.
But here's one thing I know: you chose to trace
My shame and hers: I never chose to wed
Her, never chose to say what I have said.
And yet—for whether in my match with her,
Or in the parricide, you still prefer
With bitter taunts against me, not so black
I'm shown—I put the question, answer back:
If one stood here beside you, while I speak,
And tried to kill; would you, the righteous, seek



A father in that felon, or chastise
Outright? Chastise the offender, I surmise,
If you love life, and not be circumspect
Of right and wrong. Just so my life was wrecked,
The Gods my pilots. Which, if he lived to-day,
My father's self I think could not gainsay.
And you (for you are not righteous, but you deem
All's fine, be it fair or foul, that serves a theme)
For such reproaches take such auditory!
And fine for you to flatter Theseus' glory;
Athenian polity, 'tis fine to flatter:
But in your praises you forgot one matter,
How that, of all the lands that take account
To worship Gods, this land is paramount
From which by fraud you thought to filch for prey
The old suppliant, and have rapt the maids away.
Therefore I now these Goddesses beseech
With prayers and supplicating cries of speech,
Come succour and defend, that you may rate
Aright the breed of men that keep this State!

L. of Cho. Sire, 'tis a virtuous stranger, and his grief
Was overwhelming, proper for relief.

The. Enough of words: the spirited-away
Post on their road, while we the baffled stay.

Cre. What then for these frail limbs to do's decreed?

The. Be guide on yonder road: I shall proceed
As escort, that, if somewhere hereabout
You hold the maids, yourself may point them out;
But if they're off in keeping, spare your pains,
We've such pursuers, no man ever gains
The border to give thanks for his escape.
But come, lead on: we have you by the nape,
Remember: chance has caught the trapper. Gain



Dishonest's none so easy to attain :
And sans accomplice !—not unarmed I know
Nor unequipped you ever dared to go
This present length of outrage : something came
To give you confidence to try the game.
I must be wary of it, and not permit
A single man my nation to outwit.
D'you mind me ? or does this my warning seem
Mere talk, as when you first began your scheme ?

Cre. Here all you say to me goes unimpeached :
I too shall have my turn when home is reached.

The. Menace, but move ! You, Œdipus, abide
Serenely where you are, well satisfied.
Unless I die first I will never rest
Till of your children you be re-possest.

Œd. God bless you, Theseus, for your generous heart,
And just solicitude to take my part !

[*Exeunt* THESEUS, CREON, *and attendants.*

CHORUS.

(*1st Turn.*)

There, there, would I fain be found
Where foemen are wheeling round,
Where clamour and clang resound!
Where Pythian fane stands
Matched the main stands,
Or by the bright beach [80]
Where goddesses
Mystery rites teach
To votaries—
To such upon whose tongue hath been
The sacramental key,[60] the golden,
By the gentle Eumolpid holden :—
There soon th' encounter I ween
The battle-awaking Prince will be making,
And with the Maids shall soon be seen.
Loud shouts fill the region
From the bold-spirited legion!



A Group from the Forman Vase in the British Museum. 5th Century B.C.



(*1st Counter-turn.*)

Else haply to lawns addressed
'Neath snow-covered Oia's crest
Now speeds their approach to west,
With horses whirling
The fleet cars hurl in
Keen emulation!
He shall be ours!
Grim in my nation
The Wargod's powers;
And grim be Theseus' sons to fight!
Their harness flashes like the lightning;
Onward dashes, rein untight'ning,
Massed charge o' chivalry's might!
Pallas Equestris they've for Mistress;
And they stand in the Sea-God's sight,
To the child of Rhea Phrygian,
Stay o' th' land, turns their religion!



(*2nd Turn.*)

Engaged now? Nay soon to be?
My heart's guess pleads with me:
He soon shall find, soon free
The sorely tried ones,
Sorrow loaded,
Sorely rueing
The hands of kin.
To-day! to-day! Zeus will be doing!
Doughty conflict
My heart hath boded!
O that I might
Ev'n so swiftsure
As the dove's wing,
Hurricane-paced fro' the skies light
Upon the fray, above, swing
Aloft, air-poised aloft, my eye-sight!



(*2nd Counter-turn.*)

Oho! Zeus, Almighty Lord!
All-seeing One, afford
These charged with our land's ward,
Victorious strength both
To find and follow,
And be clean-free
O' th' ambuscade!
And thou, his child! Pallas Athene!
And the Chase-God,
Hunter Apollo!
And the Twin-born (61)
Whom the roe-deer
Never distance,
(Swift tho' the dappleskin roes are)
Grant ye paired assistance!
The land calls! Succour where my
foes are!



Chorus Leader. O wandering visitor, you shall not blame
Your watchman—(here they come!—my eyes proclaim
Your daughters' rescue!)—true diviner rather!
[*Enter* ANTIGONE, ISMENE, THESEUS, *and attendants.*

Œd. Where, where? What's that? How say you?
Ant. O father, father!
O that a God might give you eyes to view
That best of men who gives us back to you!
Œd. O children, are you with me?
Ant. Ay! Theseus' arm
And his kind henchmen rescued us from harm.
Œd. Come hither, child; grant to your father's grasp
The form I never hoped again to clasp!
Ant. Fond eagerness accords it, nothing loth.
Œd. But where, where are you?
Ant. Here beside you, both.
Œd. O darling branches!
Ant. How a father craves!
Œd. Staves of a man!
Ant. Poor man, and O poor staves!
Œd. I have my darlings! If with these beside me
I died, a worse affliction might betide me.
Support me, side by side, child, left and right,
Fit faster to your father, and assuage
My solitary, doleful pilgrimage;
And tell me briefly of your escapades:
Short speaking is enough for little maids.
Ant. Hear our deliverer, father: this is he:
That is the shortest way for you and me.
Œd. My host, be not amazed if I importune
With fond excess, at this unguessed good fortune—



My children's rescue: for this sweet surprise
From none but you, I know it, can arise.
You're their deliverer, none in the world but you!
May Gods reward you, even as I would do,
You and this land! Because in all mankind
Religion here with you alone I find
And mercy and the lips that speak no lie:
This I have proved—my thanks shall testify:
And what I have, thro' you, thro' you have I!
O Prince, stretch out your hand to me (if this
May be) to touch your person, and to kiss.
What do I say, tho'? How shall I presume
Being so vile, to touch one—I in whom
Lodges all spot of evil? Not for me!
I'll not permit you either. They must be
Trained who partake in such unhappiness.
Stir not, but take my greeting, and no less
Henceforth be wise and kind my life to bless.

The. Neither if you have somewhat amply phrased
Your pleasure in the girls, am I amazed
Nor if to me their story you preferred:
'Tis my endeavour not so much by word
As in my deeds my life to glorify.[62]
I prove it too, sir, I did not belie
My oath to you in aught. For here I bring
The maids, alive, unharmed of threatening.
But how the cause was won, why idly boast?
Unaided, you're with those can tell you most.
But there's a business which not long ago
Met me: your mind upon it let me know.—
'Tis slight to speak of, yet 'tis worth surprise:
There is no matter man can well despise.

Œd. (*alarmed and anxious*). What is it, son of Aegeus? Give me clues,
I—of myself—know nothing of your news.
The. They tell us there is one, not of your nation,
But of your blood, who sits in supplication,
Before Poseidon's altar-base—the same
Where I was sacrificing, when I came.
Œd. What countryman? What might his posture want?
The. I know but this: he asks a little word
Of light significance with you, I heard.
Œd. Eh? but this session takes some thinking on't.
The. They say he craves for speech of you, and then
Safe-conduct when he goes his ways again.
Œd. Who comes like this the suppliant's seat to haunt?
The. Think, if you have not any of your race
At Argos who should come to ask this grace.
Œd. Sweet friend, hold where you are!
The. What ails you, pray?
Œd. Require me not—
The. What requisition, say?
Œd. I've heard: I recognise this suppliant now.
The. Who can it be that I should disallow?
Œd. Prince, 'tis my son, abhorred: to no man living
Could I so ill bear any audience giving.
The. Why, you may hear and let him not convert you
Against your choice: how can this audience hurt you?
Œd. No voice more hateful than my son's could be:
Put me to no compulsion to agree.
The. His posture, though: 'there's much constraint in this.
Duty to God bethink you lest you miss.



Ant. Father, although a girl to advise am I,
Listen. Allow the King to satisfy
His judgment and his God-revering sense;
To please us, give our brother audience.
He cannot pluck you from resolve perforce,
(Be comforted!) by untowàrd discourse.
Words — where's the harm to hear them?
Mal-devised
Actions, they say, by words are advertised.
You did beget him, so tho' he should do
Most foully and sacrilegiously by you,
You, father, may not requite ingratitude.
Do, let him! Others have a rascal brood
And a sharp temper, yet the admonition
Of tender spells transmutes their whole condition.
Only look back, dismiss to-day, recall
Father and mother, the horror of it all:
Considering that, you'll surely recognise
What mischief at the goal of anger lies.
Matter enough you have to meditate,
In the bereavement of your rayless eyes.
O yield! A just suit with importunate
Suitors does ill agree, and usage kind
With one who has for kind returns no mind.

Œd. It is a heavy pleasure, child, to strike
My colours to your pleading. As you like!
Only, sir, if this visit is to be,
Let never man possess himself of me.

The. Once such requests, not twice, I care to hear!
Sir, tho' I do not boast, you need not fear:
So long as God keeps me I keep you here.

CHORUS

(*Turn.*)

Sober bounds if a man forsaking
Craveth after an ampler lot;
Foolishness to his portion taking,
Clear at the bar of my heart's his sin.
Hoarded up in the long day's treasure
There is plenty to pain akin;
Seekers after the things of pleasure
Seeking busily, find them not:

When once beyond the due they fall.
Yet there is delivery coming—
When shall arise—not jubilant with a dance melody thrumming—
Portion of the Invisible, manifested
In Death, the evenly-summing.

(*Counter-turn.*)

Not to be were a prize of prizes: (63)
But if one to the light be come,
Sink back speedily whence he rises—
This is the next most excellent way.
Youth is charged with flimsy fancies;
Yet, when a man puts youth away,
What is wanting of all mischances?
What's to seek of the painful sum?

Sedition, murders, fightings, strife;
Envy too. Upon it for coping
Execrable eld falls, impotent, ever uncomforted, moping:
Sorrow of sorrow has in him a dwelling;
And with him there's no hoping.



(*Aftersong.*)

In this sore case not I alone but he lies,
As a Northern beach beside the sea lies
Whipped by the wave, stormily billow-battered—
E'en so he has been shattered:
Such grim surges of ill come,
Come battering over his head and still come.

Some from the side where the sun sinks low,
Some from the Orient light,
Some by the middle noonday glow,
From Stormhills some, of the Arctic night.

Ant. Look! This, I take it, is our foreigner,
Alone of men, father, a traveller,
Distilling ceaseless teardrops from his eyes.
[*Enter* POLYNEICES.

Œd. Who's this?

Ant. The same we did at first surmise;
'Tis Polyneices stands before you, sir.

Pol. Ay me! What shall I do? My own woes rather
Shall I lament, or of my poor old father
This woeful sight? On alien ground, outcast,
With you two I discover him at last;
And with such clothes—disgustful dirt's abode,
Ancient upon the ancient, to corrode
His sides—a socket-staring brow, with hair
Unkempt upon it, fluttering in the air;
And brother doubtless of his garb, he wears
The cheer whereon his wretched belly fares.(64)
How lost am I, who find it out so late!
Writ down a wretch by your neglected state
Of life: not elsewhere need you ask my fate.
Well, well: there sits with Zeus co-arbitress
Mercy, o'er every act: may she no less
Father, with you be found! My faults allow
Mending, and no more aggravation now.
Why silent?
O father, speak a word! Turn not away!
Not answer even? Not even give anger play?
Dismiss me disappointed, and be dumb?
O you his seed, who are my sisters, come,
Try, you at least, this father's tongue to rouse
That no approach and no address allows;
That I may not unanswered be dismissed,
And disappointed, I, God's votarist.



Ant. Unhappy man, your need and suit avow,
Plenty of words, the adage says, ere now
Melting—indignant—making to rejoice—
Have caused the voiceless one to find his voice.
Pol. Thanks for that hint: I will my tale unfold.
Firstly because that God himself I hold
My champion, whence this kingdom's arbiter
Upraised me to approach, and did confer
Charter to speak and hear and safe retire;
Which to make good, sirs, I shall now require
Of you, of these my sisters, and my sire.—
Now why I came I'd have you understand.
I am an exile from my fathers' land,
Because, as elder born, I thought it meet
That I should throne it in your sovereign seat.
Wherefore, by birth the junior, Eteocles
Pushed me abroad, by no prevailing pleas—
No proof of arm or action did he face,
But gained the people. Which event I trace
As in the main to your Erinys due: (65)
To that effect I hear from prophets too.
When I to Argos came, the Dorian hold,
Spousing Adrastus' daughter, I enrolled
In Apis' land (66) confederates, all who are
Of prime report and estimate in war,
That at the wall of Thebes I might present
With them my seven-bladed armament,
And die in the cause or cast the offenders out.
Well! you will ask, what am I here about?
Father! a suppliant prayer to you I make
Both for myself and my confederates' sake,
Who now with squadrons seven and sevenfold
Lances the Theban plain in leaguer hold:



Such Amphiareôs, a hotspur fighter, first
Of captains, prime of seers in augury versed;
Tydeus the second, sprung from Œneus' loins,
Ætolian: third, Argive Eteoclos joins;
Fourth, Talaos sent a son to 'list i' the host,
Hippomedon; fifth, Capaneus, whose boast
Would wreck Thebes town in fire and overthrow;
Arcadian Parthenopæos rose to show,
The sixth, his mother Atalanta's worth,
Namesake of the stubborn maid who gave him birth.
And I your son, tho' not your son, but sown
Of Misadventure, yet proclaimed your own,
Lead against Thebes the dauntless Argive troop.—(67)
To you, sir, all in supplication stoop!
In the name of these damsels and your name,
Yield your grave anger to the suitors' claim,
Eager for vengeance on my brother's head
Who thrust me forth and disinherited.
For the oracle, if there be trust therein,
Pronounced the side which you adopt must win.
Now by the Wells and Gods which saw your birth,
I pray you, yield, consent! We cadge in dearth,
We're aliens here, and you are alien too,
We dwell on flattery's sufferance, I and you,
Our fatal portion is the same distress;
The prince installed at home (O bitterness!)
Swaggers and mocks at me and you no less.
But if you lend a hand to my resolve,
His force full soon, full lightly I'll dissolve;
So in your house restored you'll be again,
And I restored, when he's pitched out amain:
Such vaunt is mine if you will help contrive;
Else I've not e'en strength to return alive.



L. of Cho. For the King's sake who put him on his way,
Let him go back, but say you first your say.
Œd. Sirs, as for answer, were it not the case
That Theseus introduced him to this place,
Your sovereign lord, and claimed for him the chance,
He never, I vow, had heard my utterance.
Favoured and answered now he shall retire
With that which ill shall cheer his heart's desire.
[*Turning suddenly on* POLYNEICES.
Since, villain, when the sceptre and sovereignties
Were yours, which now your brother in Thebes calls his,
You to dislodge your father did not spare,
Left me disfranchised and these weeds to wear.
And now you weep at sight of them, because
You're placed in just such trouble as I was!
No crying helps; I have to bear them, all
My days, while you, my murderer, I recall:
'Tis you, who made me nursling of distress,
You pushed me out, 'tis you I have to bless
That I'm a waif who beg my daily bread.
Had I these nurses for myself not bred,
These girls, I'd been no more, for all your share:
But they preserve me, they're my nurses, they're
Men and no women, as for service rendering;
You're of some other, none of my engendering.
So not yet turns the Spirit on you such glance [68]
As shortly, if so be these troops advance
Against Thebes state. That town to overthrow
You may not hope; ere that you must lie low,
You and your brother, both befouled in gore.
Such curses I let loose on you before,

And now I call them to my aid again,
That to revere your parents you may deign,
Not flout them quite, because the father's blind,
The sons like you: these girls were not unkind.
So your downsittings[69] and your kingly crown
They[70] overrule, if Right, of old renown,
Still share the bench of Zeus by the old decree.
Out! loathed and spurned and fatherless to me!
Villain of villains! all your scrip shall be
These curses which I call upon you: never
By arms to gain your native lands, nor ever
Reach hollow Argos, but to fell and fall
Singled and singling him who took your all.
Such is my curse: I pray the Pit of Hell,
Ghastly, paternal,[71] take you there to dwell;
I pray these Goddesses, Ares I pray
Who brought your dreadful duel-feud in play.
Set on! for now you've heard, and make it known
To all the people of Cadmus, and your own
Trusty confederates: "Such of royal meed
For his sons' portions Œdipus decreed."

Chorus Leader. I give you little joy of the road you came,
Polyneices; now make haste, retrace the same.

Pol. Woe for my journey, and my wretchedness,
Woe for my comrades! Thus then (O distress!)
Thus is the road fulfilled that we began
At Argos: such an end I never can
Tell to my comrades, nor avert, but dumb
Go to encounter that which needs must come.
O sisters, you his daughters, you who hear
A father imprecate this ban severe,[72]
Do not in God's name, if the curse come true,



And you come home to Thebes, O do not you
Hereafter leave me to dishonour quite,
But give me burial and the dead man's rite.
So shall this praise which now for tenderness
In serving him, you gain,—a praise no less
Dear, shall be yours for service done to me.

Ant. Polyneices, will you grant my earnest prayer?

Pol. Say what it is, my sweet Antigone.

Ant. Straight back to Argos bid your host repair,
To wreck your country and yourself forbear!

Pol. Impossible! One hour of cowardice—
And ne'er again I lead a host like this.

Ant. Why need you rage anew, my lad? What gain
Comes if you raze your city to the plain?

Pol. An exile, while my brother laughs to scorn
(O shame!) my précedence as elder born!

Ant. He hints your mutual death: do you observe,
His bodings carry through and never swerve?

Pol. His wishes, yes; we must not yield an inch.

Ant. Ay me, the troubles! Who will be so bold
To follow, that has heard the doom foretold?

Pol. We'll make no poor report: wise captains should
Suppress shortcomings and proclaim the good.

Ant. Then you're resolved, my lad? You will not flinch?
[*They throw their arms about him.*

Pol. Yes, stay me not. I now must give my mind
To this bad venture, all the more unkind
Thanks to my father, and his fiends of ire.
God speed you if you give me my desire!
[*He disengages himself.*
And now let go, and fare you well. We part
To meet no more alive.

Ant. O my sad heart!

Pol. You shall not weep for me.
Ant. My brother, who,
Seeing you blank-Hell-bound, will groans eschew?
Pol. I'll die, if need is.
Ant. Do not so! Comply!
Pol. 'Twere wrong compliance.
Ant. Then how wretched am I,
For I must lose you.
Pol. This or t'other way,—
It lies with God. But still, for you I pray,
May never ill event a pair befall,
So well deserving in the sight of all.
[*Exit.*



CHORUS.

Anew these cometh and again anew
Misery disastrously from the sightless guest!
Yet perchance 'tis best—
Doom falls true.
For out of all the claims supernal
Dare I none pronounce at fault:
Time watches, Time's watch's eternal:
One thing now he will exalt,
One with a change diurnal
Low down he'll wrest.[73]
[*Thunder is heard.*
Thunder in heaven! O Zeus!

Œd. O children! Is here any who'll provide
The incomparable Theseus at my side?
Ant. What's your request, that makes you call the King?
Œd. This winged thunder presently will lead
Me down to Hades. Send for him—all speed!
[*Thunder is heard again.*



CHORUS.

Look! hugely with a resounding peal
Ineffable, God's artillery, crash the shocks!
Horror thro' my locks
Thrill I feel!
My courage cowers! Again the thunder!
Lightning kindles heav'n again!
What issue breaks? In awe I wonder.
Forth it bursts never in vain
From skies crack'd asunder,
But doom unlocks!
O the high heaven! O Zeus!

Œd. O children, the divinely-spoken end
Is come on me, which nothing now can fend.
Ant. How do you know, whereby divine this thing?
Œd. I know full well. But call without delay
The King of the land, and put him on his way.



CHORUS.

Ah! Yet again! Aha! Look!
Ear-piercing sound
Imminently envelopeth me!
Pity us, O dread Lord!
Pity us, if so be
Over the earth our mother
Lours dark decree.
Because I looked on sins of other—
(O let grace in thee be found!)
Is loss all my gain?
My thanks only pain?
Zeus! Upon thee I call!

Œd. Is he at hand? My children, will he find
Me living—able still to address my mind?
Ant. What trust is this the mind must make to cling?
Œd. Kind usage with effectual gratitude
I would requite, and make my promise good.

CHORUS.

Oho! Oho! Haste, haste thee,
O haste, my son!
Whether in the summit-hollow here
Thy place now be found,
And burnt flesh of steer
Hallow the Sea-god's altar—
Theseus! appear!
The stranger claims—he's no defaulter:
He requites the kindness done—
To State, King, and friends
To make due amends.
Hurry! Approach! O Prince!

Enter THESEUS.

The. What fresh acclaim resounds, between you shared,
Clear voice of the people, and of the guest declared?
Is it the bolt of Zeus—from showering skies
The hailstorm pelting? Time for strange surmise
Enough, when God gives weather such as this.
Œd. O King, you come! I craved for you to appear:
God sets a blessing on your advent here.
The. What news, O son of Laïos? What's amiss?
Œd. The dip of the scales of life. I'd not belie
My bond to you and yours before I die.
The. Upon what proof rest you so confident?
Œd. The Gods themselves are harbingers to apprise;
Of all the appointed signs, there's none that lies.
The. What is it, sir, you mean that tells the event?
Œd. Plenty of pauseless thunder, lightning brands
Wielded in plenty by the Almighty hands.



The. You move me. Divination plenty in you
I see, unfeigned. Say what you'd have me do.
Œd. I will impart a thing that shall be held
In trust for Athens, unimpaired of eld.
Of guides unhandled, there myself will I
Be guide this selfsame hour, where I must die:
This place, to living men reveal it not
Nor whereabouts nor secrecies of the spot;
So shall the abiding succour it shall yield
Match borrowed battle and many a neighbour's shield.
The mystic thing, untampered-with by speech,
You'll hear when all alone the place you reach:
That may I not to any burgher tell,
Nor to my children, tho' I love them well.
But husband it for ever, and whene'er
Life's term you touch, instruct your first-born heir;
And each to his successor still reveal:
So shall you keep unwrecked of the Sown Men's[74] heel
Your territories. The mass of States are quick
Despite wise polities, to swell and kick.
Full well, tho' late in time, the Gods observe,
Worship forgot, when men to madness swerve.[75]
O Son of Aegeus, such a case eschew:
Yet this is precept given to one who knew.
But to the place—the spirit bids begone:
Let us no longer dally but set on.
[*He sets out to walk, the others following him.*
Here, children, follow: strange that I should be
Turned guide to you, as once you guided me!
Move on and do not touch me: let me find

Myself the holy burying-place designed
By doom to ensconce this body in the mould.
Come! this way! come! 'tis here! I tread controlled
By Hermes the Escort and the Nether Queen.
O beamless Daylight, mine I know thou hast been,
Of thee for this last time my limbs have sense.
I carry now my life's fulfilment hence
In death to hide it. O my friend, so dear,
Yourself, your land, and these retainers here,
Blessings be with you; wealthy be your store;
Think of me dead and thrive for evermore.

[*Exit, followed by* THESEUS, ANTIGONE, *and* ISMENE.





Portion of drum of sculptured column from Temple of Artemis at Ephesus, in the British Museum. 4th Century B.C.



CHORUS.

(*Turn.*)

Mine if it is to yield
Praise to the Unrevealed
Goddess, and mine to dare
Pray to the Prince of Darkness—Aidôneus!
Aidôneus! a prayer!
With a serene unlamentable end
Quickly his way let the stranger wend
Down, down, t'ward Dead Men's Weald—to
Stygian abodes, rich in ages' store!
Since many and sore plagues he bore,
Visited with vain distress,(76)
'Tis time that Heav'n's justice turn
again to bless.

(*Counter-turn.*)

Powers of the Underworld!
Shape of the Beast upcurled,
Stronger than might of men!
Close to the guest-frequented gate lieth he
a-snarling from his den,
Sentinel indomitable of death:
So the tradition of ages saith.
O Death, Earth-born, Hell-fathered,—blank be
the walks of the Beast, I pray
Until *his* way free to-day
Down to Dead Men's Weald he
take!
O Final Slumber, I to thee petition
make!

Enter a MESSENGER.

Mes. Sirs, citizens, the truth were quickly said
When I should tell you Œdipus is dead;
But, for the circumstances—no more short
The words can be than the acts which they report.
Cho. Poor soul! He's dead then?
Mes. So much may be taken
For sure—his daily being he's forsaken.
Cho. How? After some divine and painless sort?
Mes. For that your full astonishment prepare.
When hence he first 'gan walk—and you were there—
You know it well—no guide familiar led,
But of us all he went himself ahead.
When at the THRESHOLD CATARACT[77] arrived
(Deep in the earth with bronze root-bases gyved),
He stayed in one of many-severed alleys
Beside the Bowl,[78] where still are Theseus' tallies
Which of his bond with Perithous keep stock.
So placed, midway from the THORICIAN ROCK,[79]
The hollow Pear-tree and the Tomb of Stone,
Sat down; undid his raiment filth-o'ergrown;
Then with a loud cry bade his daughters bring
Lavers of running water and Offering:
They to Demeter of Green Blades[80] addressed
Their steps, the mount of prospect; his behest
In little time despatched, and furnished him
With bath and raiment, all in ritual trim.
As soon as to his liking all was done
Of his commands unprosecuted none,
Zeus Underground pealed thunder: at which sound
Shuddered the maids, and falling down around



Their father's knees they wept and took no rest
From groans long drawn and beatings of the breast.
But he, when on his ear the sad strain broke,[81]
Suddenly folded hands on them and spoke:
"Children, this day your father is no more;
All's over with me; and for you the sore
Laborious burden that in me you bore.
Children, 'twas rough, I know, and yet one phrase
Your wearinesses all alone repays:
True love from never any one so true
You had, as his that's parted now from you
For all the life that's left you to pursue."
So lapped in close embraces, each with each,
They sobbed and cried, until they seemed to reach
A term of lamentation. Not a groan
More. Silence. When a sudden VOICE unknown
Halloo'd him. Every man in sudden dread
Pricked up erect the hairs upon his head:
God calls him with a loud and changing cry!
"OHO, THERE! ŒDIPUS! OHO, THERE! WHY
WAIT WE TO GO? TOO LONG THOU LOITEREST."
He, when he knew of God he was addrest,
Called loudly for King Theseus to draw near:
And said when he approached him: "Brother dear,
Give to my daughters the unchanging troth
Of your right hand—yours to him, children, both:
Vow of your free will to betray them never,
But act their good friend in all acts whatever."
He like a man of honour gave his troth,
Thereto unhesitating, under oath.
And that no sooner finished, Œdipus
Touching with fingers blind his children, thus:
"My daughters, now to your noblesse be true,

Depart these purlieus, nor presume to view
The unpermitted, nor the voices hear.
Remove, delay not: one alone be near,
Theseus, by right empowered, to watch the affair."
Thus much we all, as many as were there,
Heard him pronounce. Sighing abundantly
We with the damsels went in company.
When some way gone we turned ere long to scan—
No longer present anywhere the man!
The King we saw: hand reached before his face
To shade his eyes, as if there had took place
Some grim affright which eyes could not endure.
Then in a little ('twas not long, I'm sure),
We saw that he the Earth and Sky adored,
Earth and Olympian Heaven in one accord.
But what the manner of that doom might be
No man can tell except his Majesty.
For neither did God's thunder primed with flame
Despatch him, neither blast of whirlwind came
Out of the deep sea stirring in that hour.
Some God did usher him, or gracious power
The rayless bottom of the earth disparted;
For neither sickness-racked nor heavy-hearted
Was his leave-taking, but beyond compare
Prodigious. Call me madman, little I care
The man that calls me madman, to convince!

Chorus Leader. Where are the maids and escort of the prince?

Mes. Here, not far off. Yon soon-deciphered cries
Of mourning their approach do advertise.



Enter ANTIGONE *and* ISMENE.

TRIO : ANTIGONE, ISMENE, *and* CHORUS.

(*Turn A.*)

Ant. Woe ! woe ! To wail aloud is granted
(No may-be-yes, may-be-nay) when we sorrow for
Accursèd father's blood in us implanted.
Weariful history
Ours with him day by day—never a morrow more !
Only hereafter we cite you a mystery
Of grief beheld and tasted.

Cho. How went it ?

Ant. Surmising, friends, 'tis but surmise.

Cho. Departed ?

Ant. Ev'n as heart's desire would have him be.
Verily no brunt of sea,
No plague of war hath wasted ;
But the Viewless Weald did swallow
In a recondite doom hurried away.
Unhappy ! Night upon my eyes
Now is fallen, Night disastrous : whither are we now to stray ?
Foreign soil or deep-sea billow ? Where pursue the chance
Of our distressful maintenance ?

I m. Little know I : ravening clutch of Death seize on me !
After father dead to follow,
Unhappy, afterdays of life gladly to live declining.

Cho. Dutiful daughters, Fate so bearing,[82] better to bear the God's decree :
Burn ye no more, your ways have been worthy of no repining.

(*Counter-turn A.*)

Ant. For e'en woes past there is regret then !
Welcome a lot that were welcome to nobody,
Because that in my arms I had him yet then !
Father and well-belov'd,
Now that the Darkness Eternal's a robe to thee
Yet of my sister and me shall ye still be loved,
And we will fail thee never.

Cho. He fareth—

Ant. He fareth as he fain would fare.

Cho. Can that be ?

Ant. In the stranger's land that pleased him best,
Perished he takes his rest
In the shadow laid for ever ;
Leaves us mourning—oh not tearless !
Father, I weep for thee abundantly, my eye
Bemoans thee ; and I cannot bear—
Cannot find a means to make the heavy sorrow fly.
Ay me ! In the foreign country die thou wouldst, but oh !
(83) Unhonoured by me diedst thou so !

Ism. Oh, unhappy ! is there yet another anguish left at last—
So forsaken, helpless, cheerless—
Yet held in wait for thee and me ?—fatherless and denuded !

Cho. Yet, as in blessedness his end of life unravelling, he passed ;
Cease to lament. Pain dogs mankind, not to be long eluded.



(*Turn B.*)[84]

Ant. Back, sister, let us hasten—
Ism. What to try?
Ant. Yearning is upon me.
Ism. What?
Ant. Earth-buried abode to contemplate.
Ism. Of whom?
Ant. A father's! O my fate!
Ism. Can this be lawful? Dost thou not
Comprehend?
Ant. Why am I reprovĕd?
Ism. This, moreover——
Ant. Is there a more yet?
Ism. Burial none has he, lonely, removĕd.
Ant. To it! away! and slay me o'er it!
Ism. Woe! woe! all-unhappy, where now
Once again, forlorn, resourceless.
Drag out my day of care now?

(*Counter-turn B.*)

Cho. Be not alarmed, dears.
Ant. But whither must I fly?
Cho. Already deliverance
Ant. Eh?
Cho. Has saved your fortunes from distress.
Ant. I see. . . .
Cho. Deny me not your guess.
Ant. How shall we homeward make our way,
I despair.
Cho. Put the thought behind you!
Ant. Misery enfolds——
Cho. Whiles ago ye donned that!
Ant. Then inevitable, and now beyond that.
Cho. Perilous gulf, as it were, assigned you.
Ant. Woe! woe! Zeus, we know not where now!
Hope—is any hope yet, whither
A God can bid repair now?

Enter THESEUS.

DUET *in Marching Measure.* THESEUS *and* ANTIGONE.

The. Cease the lament: 'tis a time not for mourning.
Grace of the grave will abide as a treasure
Joint-stored.[85] 'Tis a sin to be yearning.
Ant. O son of Aegeus, list to us kneeling!
The. Daughter, the suit that you plead, say, what is it?
Ant. Grave of our sire we're fain to revisit:
With our eyes let us see!
The. Nay, this cannot be.
Ant. Prince of the Athenians, is this our answer?
The. Children, the place is debarred — 'twas his pleasure—
Mortal approach may never advance there,
Mortal voice he forbade the revealing
Where in his hallowed grave he reposes:
Which commandment duly obeying,
Ever unhurt shall abide my nation.
Such was the bond, and a God stood witness,
OATH, son of Zeus, a God all-surveying.
Ant. Nay, but if such were his charges, a fitness
Makes us accept such consummation.
Home to the ancient Thebes then send, to
Stay if we may what approaches of slaughter
Threaten our kin there.
The. Thereto aid, all aid will I lend to
Further your cause, and the cause, my daughter,

Of the one 'neath th' earth, newly within there.
Gratitude forbids me to falter.

CHORUS.

Nay, but enough of your dirges so tearful:
Time to be cheerful!
The thing fast-fixed cannot alter.

[*Exeunt.*

ANTIGONE

SCENE.—*Before the gates of the Palace at Thebes. Time: Early morning.*

Ant. Kinborn, Ismene, in sistership germane,
Know you in all our sire's entail of pain
A thing the like of which Zeus has not wrought
On us surviving? Ever anguish-fraught!
Fraught ever with the curse! No shame so mean
But in your lot and mine the like I've seen!
And now, once more, upon the people at large,
Newly proclaimed, they say the king lays charge
Of—what? You have no word? You do not know
How on our friends moves malice from this foe?
Ism. Of those dear ones of ours, Antigone,
No news, welcome or painful, 's come to me
Since we two were bereft of brothers two,
Whom on one day a double murder slew.
Since the Argeian host this night withdrew
From leaguer, I'm aware of nothing more,
Blessing or tribulation, than before.
Ant. I knew it well; and here without preferred
To speak where you may hear unoverheard.
Ism. O brooding groundswell of the unuttered word!

Ant. Yes! Burial! Creon has advanced one brother
Of yours and mine, to disappoint the other:
Eteocles, they say, in earth's enshrined
Duly, to honour among the dead consigned;
The corpse of Polyneices, cruelly slain,
Word is gone out that every man refrain
From burying in the grave, or making moan:
Unwept, unburied, left to birds, alone,
Choice hoard for watchful appetites to see!
They say so runs it, mark you—nay, let me
Too mark it!—our good Creon's high decree;
He comes his proclamation here to make
To all the unapprised, and does not take
The thing for naught; but whoso dares to try,
It is appointed shall be stoned and die.
So stands the case: you soon must prove the worth
Of your noblesse, or base belie your birth.

Ism. If this be so, what help, O sorely tried,
To unravel or to knit can I provide?

Ant. Think:—if you'll follow me to do and dare!

Ism. What sort of venture? Stands your purpose—where?

Ant. —If you will help this arm to uplift the dead!

Ism. You mean to bury him?—prohibited?

Ant. Mine, and—if you refuse—your brother: yes.

Ism. When Creon has said you nay? Foolhardiness!

Ant. He has no business me from mine to bar.

Ism. O sister, be advised of what we are!
Our sire fell,[86] execrated and defamed,
With suicidal stroke his vision maimed,
Of self-detected sins for very shame;
And then the mother-wife, the double name,

With twinèd noose wrought on her life defeat;
And, third, one day has seen two brothers meet
To kill themselves, and there, unfortunates!
With kindred hands achieve their mutual fates.
And we, if now—forsaken, quite alone—
We brave the power or verdict of the throne
Despite the law, take thought how far the worst
Our end will be. We must remember, first,
We're but a pair of women, as not to fight
With men; and also, being ruled of might,
In this, and harder ev'n than this, to obey.
So I, upon this plea of force, shall pray
For pardon to the people underground [87]—
And loyal to authorities be found:
There is no sense in being meddlesome.

Ant. I'll bid you not! Nor, tho' you cared to come
Hereafter, would I gladly such ally
Accept! Be what you like! But him will I
Bury—and if I die in the act, 'tis good:
Dear will I lie in his dear neighbourhood,
A saintly malefactress. *There* not *here* [88]
I have the longer date myself to endear:
There must I lie forever. You, no doubt,
The holy truths [89] of use and wont may flout!

Ism. It is not that I flout them; but to brave
The public will—I could not so behave!

Ant. I leave you then to such pretences; I
Go heap my darling brother's barrow high.

Ism. Unhappy girl! Oh how for you I fear!

Ant. Quake not for me, but lift your own life clear! [90]

Ism. So be it then!—Yet one thing tho': apprise
None of this deed. Keep dark, and I likewise.

Ant. Denounce it! Fail to blaze it high and low,
And silence only makes you more my foe![91]
Ism. "Hot heart on chilly venture"[92]—there's your case.
Ant. I'm sure I please where most I need gain grace.
Ism. But *power!* You crave for things which cannot be!
Ant. Well, when my strength ends, there's an end of me.
Ism. What cannot be, is best left unpursued.
Ant. If that's your text, with me you'll be at feud,
And meet the dead in his just feud no less.
Leave it to me and my wrongheadedness
To face this frightful thing! For naught can come
To rob me of my glory in martyrdom.
Ism. Well, if you will, set on! But never fear;
Mad ways to dear ones make you no less dear.

[*Exeunt.*



EPITAPH.

"O'er my back the mallows pass,
And thickly root the asphodels;
But within my bosom dwells
Laios' son, ŒDIPODAS."

Enter CHORUS *of Theban Elders, assembled to celebrate the dawn of day after the victory.*

(*1st Turn.*)
Sunbeam! Never a lovelier
Dawned on Thebes to awaken her
Seven Ports in the days of old!
The Dawn, ris'n at last, in a gleam,
Passes over the Dircè stream,
Open eyelid of dayspring golden!
Foeman mail'd with buckler of white,
Who from Argos sallied to fight,
Precipitately she turns him to flight—
Bit nor bridle can hold him!

(*1st Movement, of marching measure.*)
In the cause of the Son of Debate[103] he arose,
In the cause of debate and of quarrel he fell
On the country to whelm it.
Loud he screamed, as an eagle upsoaring,
All proof-mailed in a snow-white feather,
Gathering men-at-arms many together,
With a horsehair crest on his helmet.



(*1st Counter-turn.*)
O'er our halls did the eagle tow'r!
Spears blood-mad in a ring at our
Sev'n Port entries, he gaped to slay!
But pass'd, ere on gore of his foe
Jaws could batten, or piny glow
Strip our Thebes of the towers that braid her.
Loud to rearward, loud as he fled,
Thrilled the clang of battle and spread!
'Tis the progeny of the Dragon,[94] a dread
Piece to baulk an invader!

(*2nd Movement.*)[95]
For the anger of Zeus, it is heavy on those
Whose tongue vaunts highly; He marked full well
Clangour of golden array vainglorious—
Marked floodtide of assault on-sweeping;—
Then with a levelled flame He felled him
Just at the finish—aloft now!—leaping
To upraise an *Hurrah!* victorious!

(*2nd Turn.*)

Frantic in ecstasy pressed he against us, breathing
Blasts of his enmity: swung in his own flame's wreathing,
Down he tumbled on earth; whose ground
Made his fall to rebound.
So mis-fared
What he dared!
All were o'erthrown!
Each one his own
Doom they have found!
Ares! None carries a collar with Ares! [96]

(*3rd Movement.*)

At the Seven Town-Ports seven chiefs were arrayed;
Every man in a match with his man there paid
Of his panoply tax to the Turner of Fights. [97]
But the Pair,[98] the Accurst, each upon other,
By might of the lance victory merit,
And—of self sire born, born of a mother—
Joint portion of death coinherit.

(*2nd Counter-turn.*)
Merry to see that the Lady of Cars[99] is merry,
Victory came, the renown'd. 'Tis a time to bury
These late wars in forgetfulness;
Time it is to address
Holy feet,
The fanes to greet.
All the night long,
Dances and song!
Bacchus will bless—
Leader will hé be, the Shaker of Thebé!



Enter CREON.

Cho. (*in march measure*). Nay, look! for the king of
the land draws near:
'Tis the son of Menoeceus—Creon is here.
New changes and chances a new king have made.
To what end does he ply the quick oarage of
thought?
Wherefore has he brought,
Us convoked, grey heads of the nation?
Before us to debate, what the issues laid?
—Thus called by his high proclamation.

Cre. The common weal, Sirs, shook by tempest sore,
The Gods have soundly righted as before.
But for ourselves: my message summoned you,
Separate from the mass, because I knew
Both your tried faith to Laïos' kingly power,
And too when Œdipus was governour;
And after his undoing, when his heirs
Reigned, you were steadfast partizans of theirs.
Now since a double doom has laid them low
In one day—smitten and smiters of the blow—
Tainted, as whoso shall his own [100] blood shed;
'Tis I, by next-of-kinship to the dead,
Who hold the royal seat and high control.
There is no means nicely to gauge the soul,[101]
Temper, and wit of any man, unless
By rub of rule and law he first confess
His quality. Whoso rules a people as king,
And does not by the best of counsel cling,



But puts a lock on 's tongue from any fear,
Appears to me, and ever did appear,
A rogue. The man who more for friend can care
Than for his native land, I rate nowhere.
Myself (all-seeing Zeus, eternal, hear me !)
I could not hold my peace and see draw near me
Instead of civil weal a civil woe ;
Nor could I ever make my country's foe
My private friend : because 'tis she, I know,
Who keeps us all in life ; she must maintain
An even keel ere any friends we gain.
By such precepts this realm will I enrich.
Joint-twin to these is now the edict which
Touching the race of Œdipus I make :
Eteocles, who for the land did stake
His life, and lost it in a gallant fight,
Shall be entombed and shriven with every rite
That reaches the most noble dead below.
But Polyneices, his blood-brother—No !
—Who dared, a banished outlaw, to return
To home and native Gods, essayed to burn
And wreck his home and Gods with fire, essayed
To sup on kindred blood, and would have made
Slaves of the rest—our high command it is,
No dirge nor burial ceremony be his ;
But, left unburied, meat his carcase be
For birds and dogs, outraged for eyes to see.
Such is my temper : it shall not be my deed
When rogues in honour shall the just exceed.
This land of ours, who sets his love upon her,
Alive or dead, of me he shall have honour !

L. of Cho. So runs your pleasure, Creon, Menoeceus' son,
Towards the ill-willing and towards the loyal one.

To take all order is your prerogative
Both for the dead and all of us who live.
Cre. Mind that you watch to execute my word!
Lea. This task were best on younger men conferr'd.
Cre. Watching the corpse? For that I have my men.
Lea. What more do you enjoin upon us then?
Cre. Yourselves with the rebellious not to ally.
Lea. No man's so foolish that he craves to die!
Cre. True, that's the wages of it! Lucre though
Oft plays upon surmise to bring men low.

Enter a guard as MESSENGER.

Mes. My lord, I will not say, "*With labouring lung*
I am arrived, so brisk a leg I swung;"
For halts of meditation many I made,
Oft on my road I wheeled about and stayed,
Because my heart, I found, had much to say,
"*Poor fellow! going where you'll have to pay?*"
"*Stopping again? O wretch! If Creon hears*
This from another, what can save your ears?"
Revolving so, despatch ran none too fast:
Short road grows long thus. Anyhow, at last
It gained the day that I should come. I know
It may be nothing—I will tell it though.
The worst that can befall me is but such
As doom predestinates: that faith I clutch.
Cre. But what's the matter, man, that you're so glum?
Mes. First, if you please, about myself!—because
I did not do it, and saw not who it was;
To any hurt I cannot fairly come.
Cre. You take long aim, and fence it well about,
This business! 'Tis some startling news, no doubt.



Mes. Ugly affairs to hesitation lend.
Cre. Cannot you speak, and go, and make an end?
Mes. Well, speak I do. That dead man—one has just
Buried him and departed, thirsty dust
Sprinkling upon his flesh, and duly shriving.
Cre. What's that? What man did hazard this contriving?
Mes. I know not. There was neither pickaxe' stroke,
Nor mattock's throwing up; the ground unbroke,
Unscored by wheels—a hard and barren place.
This was your sort of man that leaves no trace!
The first day-watchman points it out, and then
An awkward wonder fell on all our men.
He was invisible:—not barrow-piled;
Dust, thin strewn—one who feared to be defiled,[102]
You'd say. But trace of dog or savage beast
Coming and tearing at him, none the least!
Then ugly words—one with another, guard
Accusing guard—ran high; it had gone hard
To end in blows (and none was there to stay),
For every one to each, "*'Twas you*," might say:
None manifest, all pleading ignorance.
Lift red-hot iron? Through the fire advance?
Swear by the Gods?—each man was nothing loath
To clear himself of the act, by test or oath,—
That nor design nor deed he did abet.
—But when, in search, we could no further get,
One up and speaks, and moves us all to bow
Our heads to earth, because we knew not how
To answer him; nor yet, if we complied,
To come well off:—his speech was *Not to hide*
The business, but report to you. The plan
Carried the day, and me (unlucky man!)

The lot adjudged to draw this prize; and so
Misliking and by you misliked, I know,
I'm here: none loves the messenger of woe.

L. of Cho. Prince! from the first my conscience bade me ponder—
"May be the hand of God was working yonder!"

Cre. Cease!—ere your words quite cram me full with rage.
Prove not yourself a dotard in your age.
You said a thing past patience, when you said
That Gods can have regard for this man dead.
Was it as benefactor, prized, none higher,
They covered him who came to burn with fire
The colonnaded temple and treasure-chamber,
Their sacred lands to burn, their laws dismember?
Gods honouring a villain? See you that?
Impossible! (*meditates for a while*)
This they were chafing at:[103]
They stirred against me from the first—supprest
Shaking of heads—they never had their crest
Fairly beneath the yoke, nor acquiesced.
It is by those,[103] I'm very sure, that these
Were brought to play this trick, seduced with fees.
—Ay! never usage grew which so disgraced
Mankind as money![104] This lays cities waste,
From dwelling-place evicts the citizen;
Sophisticates, makes minds of honest men,
Gone wrong, take up with dirty businesses;
Points them to knavish ways; puts godlessness
Into their heart enough for any crime!—
But all these hireling perpetrators, time
Will prove, have only got the price to pay.



As I still worship Zeus in the old way,
—Now mark me well! my oath to what I say—
Unless you shall discover and display
The felon author of this burial rite
Before my eyes, mere death for you's too light,
Till first, dangling alive, you shall reveal
This wantonness. I'll teach you whence to steal
When next you go for gains! I'll have you learn
To love not gain where'er the gain you earn!
For you shall note, a man by dirty pelf
More often damnifies than helps himself!

Mes. One word you'll grant?—or, straight to right-about?

Cre. Cannot you see your talking puts me out?

Mes. Is't in the ear it stings or in the soul?

Cre. Would you my pain, its whereabouts, control?

Mes. The culprit grieves your heart, and I your ears.

Cre. Ugh! what a rattle born the fellow appears!

Mes. Well, but at least, *that* trick I never played.

Cre. Yes! and, what's more, for coin your life betrayed!

Mes. Dear, dear!
'Tis hard a man must guess and guess amiss! (105)

Cre. Oh, mince away with "guessing"! If of this
You shew me not the authors, you shall preach
That woe's the gain of rogues that overreach!
[*Exit.*

Mes. May he be found!—by all means. But be he
Caught or not caught—that lies in Luck's decree—
Here shall you not again set eyes on me!—
Saved (many thanks I owe the Gods for it)—
Past all belief this time or human wit.
[*Exit.*

CHORUS.[106]

(*1st Turn.*)

Wonder and awe at large I find :
No such wonder of all as Man !
Overseas will it pass to span
Oceans, grey with an angry wind ;
Low under a gulfing world
Up-swirl'd
Of billow, sail it can !
And Earth, the Pow'r of highest birth,
The Earth,
Deathless, unwearying—ever as year for year
Furrowing-season revolves—he will weary her
And grind,
Ploughing with the steed
His breed.

(*1st Counter-turn.*)

Sort of the madcap birds in air,
Savage people of beasts in the fields,
Sea-creation that ocean yields—
All in toils of a mesh-spun snare
Ta'en captive he leads away,
For prey.
Man ! the wits he wields !
The brutes that from the wilds, their home,
Do roam
Large on the mountain, he tames ; and a shaggy-neck'd,
Steed with his crest in a collar to drag he breaks ;
Ploughshare
Tireless mountain bull
Must pull !

(*2nd Turn.*)

And Language and windy-quick Thought
He taught it himself, and the temper of Order and
Polity undistraught
He taught.
He, though the air drearily freezes,
Though the rain
Beats amain,—
Knows a remedy! Remediless encountereth
No morrow, what
E'er his lot:
Only no escape from Death
Procures, by lore which fails him not
Against diseases.

(*2nd Counter-turn.*)

His subtlety passes belief
In cunning invention of Art! Very brief is his
journey to Glory, brief
To grief!
The man that acts Law's upbearer,
And his oath
Holds for troth,
Proud citizen is he!—Cityless, when venturesome
With worser tricks
He shall mix!
Ne'er such man with me become
Hearth-mate, nor in his politics
May I be sharer!

Enter ANTIGONE, *in arrest, guarded by the former* MESSENGER.

CHORUS (*in march measure*).

Sight portentous! I doubt and I wonder—
Nay, but I know: there is no gainsaying:
That is Antigone, that child yonder!
Oh, the ill-fated
Of an ill-fated father engendered!
What is it? Oh, not *thou* disobeying
Kings' commands? To arrest surrendered
In the folly her heart meditated?

Gua. Here is the one that carried out the thing!
We caught her burying him. But where's the King?

L. of Cho. Here, from the house he comes to answer that.

Enter CREON.

Cre. Eh? What's the event my coming suits so pat?

Gua. Man never ought to swear *I will not*, Prince!
For after-thought belies opinion. Since
I could have vowed, *Not soon I'll here be seen*
After your threats, belaboured as I'd been.
Ah! but the extra joy, the glad surprise,
No pleasure can be match'd with that for size!
Tho' sworn *I will not*, here I come and bring
This maiden: she was taken furnishing
The burial forth. No casting lots for this!
My Godsend—none beside can say 'twas his!

Now, Sir, you have her: take, as pleases you,
Try her and question her! But I am due
To get my full discharge from all the stew!

Cre. Arrested—whence?—this maid? How came you at her?

Gua. She was burying him. You have the matter.

Cre. Do you mean and comprehend the thing you've said?

Gua. Yes; for I saw her burying him, the dead;
Whom you forbade. Is that plain tale of fact?

Cre. How was she seen and seized outright in the act?

Gua. The matter went this way. No sooner there
(Under your dreadful menace as we were),
We swept the dusty wrapper which enclosed
The dead, and left the weltering corpse exposed.
To windward, by the hilltop, down we sit,
Well out of range for stink from *him* to hit.
And man kept man with ugly words alert
If any one his duty should desert.
So for a time it was, till by-and-by
The sun's bright disk rode midway up the sky,
And heat grew scorching: when a sudden gust
(Sky-plague!) uplifts from earth a storm of dust.
It fills the plain and all the leafy wood
Along the plain torments; high heaven stood
Thick. Closing eye, the pest of God we took.
'Twas long before 't abated. Then we look,
And lo! the girl! with wails of high distress—
Shrill as the cry of bird in bitterness
To see home rifled, chick-bereaved the bed:
—And even so, when stripped she sees the dead,
She screamed a loud lament, and with the worst
Curses the doers of the deed she cursed.



Then drouthy dust in hand straightway she fetched,
And from a jug of hammered bronze, out-
stretched,
With three libation-draughts the dead she crowned.
But when we saw, we up and closed around,
And took her in a moment—undismayed.
When to her charge the former acts we laid,
And these, she did not offer to deny
At all. Both glad and sorry at once was I:
Right glad when your own trouble's at an end
For you, but sorry work to bring a friend
To trouble! Oh! but all such things amount
To little when my own escape I count!

Cre. (*to* ANT.) You—you, who toward the ground
your glances bow,
Do you deny this action or avow?

Ant. I do avow and not deny the charge.

Cre. (*to* GUA.) Take yourself off, where'er you like
to be,
Absolved from heavy accusation, free!
[*Exit* GUARD.
(*to* ANT.) You,—tell me quick, no length of
words!—you knew
The edict had forbidden so to do?

Ant. Yes. Could I fail to know? 'Twas noised at
large.

Cre. And you presumed beyond the law to go?

Ant. Yes: for not Zeus, I think, proclaimed it so;
Not justice, dwelling with the Gods below,
The type of human statute so defined.[107]
Nor could I in your proclamation find
Such force that mortal creature might out-range
The unwritten code of Gods which cannot change:



Not of to-day nor yesterday—'tis living
For evermore, and none can date its giving!
And was it likely I should fear the pride
Of any man so much as, this defied,
To face God's bar? That I must die, I knew:
Oh yes—edict or no! If ere time due,
I count that gain. For one who lives, as I
Live, in much misery—how can he die
And not be gainer? Slight the pain to me,
To meet this fate; but had I borne to see
My mother's son a graveless corpse remain,
Painful it had been: now I feel no pain.
A fool's act? Well, are you yourself, who rule
My act is folly, better than a fool?

L. of Cho. Harsh was the sire, the breed proves harsh no less
In her: she knows no yielding in distress.

Cre. Nay, but I'll have you know, pride overstiff
Has falls the most; and hardest iron, if
The fire shall to excessive temper bake,
You shall observe most often flaw and break.
A little curb, when horses chafe and fume,
I know, will mend their manners! little room
For pride to swell when master lives next door!
This girl, adept in insolence before
When ordinance of law she overstepped,
Proves now afresh in insolence adept
After the act: she laughs and vaunts her plan!
Upon my word, I'm no man—she's the man
If this triumph of hers go unatoned!
Not—be she sister's child—not, though she owned
More ties of blood than all yon household shrine
Assembles—shall she 'scape from doom condign!

—Nor yet her sister !—on whom I charge no whit
The less this burial, the designing it.
And summon her. Within, this very hour
Stark mad I saw her, reft of reasoning power.
Oft preconvicted knave the heart hath stood
Of them that in the dark devise no good.
Ay ! but I loathe it when detected in
Misdeeds they seek to glorify the sin.

Ant. To take and kill me : seek you more than this ?

Cre. Not I ! When I have that, there's naught I miss !

Ant. Then why delay ? There's nothing pleases me
That you can utter—never may there be !
And I'm not made to be approved by you.
But, name of more renown what could I do
To win, but bury my own-brother ? Yes,
These men would every one of them confess
Approval, did not fear their tongue suppress.
The happy state of kings is happy chiefest
In power to do and speak as they had liefest !

Cre. You in all Thebes alone so view the matter.

Ant. *They* do, but fawn and wag their tongues to flatter.

Cre. And can they not shame you to feel the same ?

Ant. Pious towards my flesh and blood—what shame ?

Cre. Was he who fell on t'other side no brother ?

Ant. Blood-brother ; selfsame sire, and one to mother.

Cre. Impious to *him* then was the grace conferred.

Ant. The dead man will not testify that word.

Cre. Graced equal with the impious !—that he will.

Ant. 'Tis no dead slave this : 'tis a brother still.

Cre. Looting the land !—while t'other stood to save !

Ant. Death all the same his ordinance will crave.

Cre. Sharing alike—the good and the wicked ? No.

Ant. Who knows ? It may be clean from slur below.



Cre. Never can foemen even in death be lovers.
Ant. Pleas not for feud but love my heart discovers.
Cre. If love you must, get you below and give
Them love! No woman rules me while I live.

Enter ISMENE, *in arrest.*

CHORUS (*march measure*).

Look! At the doors Ismene approaches!
—Shedding sisterly drops of affection:
Cloud on the brow, and a face bloodstained!
Comely complexion
Disgraced by the tear that encroaches!

Cre. (*to* ISM.) And you! viper in the house, meek, lurking! you,
Bloodsucking me unobserved—who little knew
What couple of pests—rebellions—I had there!—
Come tell me pray, will you confess a share
In burying him, or cognisance forswear?
Ism. The deed is mine—if she supports my claim:
I take and bear my portion in the blame.
Ant. No! that shall Right forbid! You had no heart
To help: I would not yield you any part.
Ism. But now that you're in trouble I have no shame
Myself your shipmate in distress to name.
Ant. Whose deed it was, Death and the dead know best!
Friend that in word befriends me I detest.
Ism. Nay, sister, disappoint me not of dying
With you, with you the dead man sanctifying.
Ant. My death you shall not die! You shall not own
Where you'd no finger! My death serves alone.
Ism. By you forsaken, what joy in life have I?
Ant. Ask Creon! *There* your pious duties lie.

Ism. Why will you tease me so, with naught to gain?
Ant. Oh, if I mock at you, I mock in pain.
Ism. Could I not ev'n yet help in any shape?
Ant. Save you yourself: I grudge not your escape.
Ism. Wretch that I am! Your end must I resign?
Ant. Yes; for your choice was life, and death was mine.
Ism. —No plea unurged tho' that I could devise:—
Ant. In your eyes you, and I in *theirs*[108] was wise.
Ism. Indeed alike with both transgression lies.
Ant. Take courage! you have life; but long ago
My soul is dead to help the dead men so.
Cre. This pair of girls, I think they're crazy—one
Of late, the other since her days begun!
Ism. Ah, yes, my Lord, for even the ingrown wit
Abides not with mishap, but fain must flit.
Cre. Yours did!—who with misdoers chose misdeed.
Ism. Parted from her, to live how can I need?
Cre. Oh, *she*—account her not: her days are done.
Ism. But can you kill the bridals of your son?
Cre. He'll find elsewhere fields for his husbandry.
Ism. But nowhere else *their* loving constancy.
Cre. Bad women to my sons I like not plighted.
Ant. O darling Haemon!—by your father slighted.
Cre. You and your match—I'm weary of you both!
L. of Cho. You'll rob your son of her who had his troth?
Cre. Death to this marriage puts a bar, not I.
L. of Cho. The warrant is gone forth, then, that she die?
Cre. Yes! yours and mine. No dallying, now! within
Remove them, fellows! Time that they begin
To be more woman and less gad-at-will.
Those run for life at last who're bold until
Death face to face lay hand on life to kill!

[*Exeunt* ANT. and ISM., *guarded.*



CREON *remains alone on the stage, while the* CHORUS *sing :—*

(*1st Turn.*)

How blest is a man when his days have known no taste of ill !
Once a house hath quaked with the shock of a God's ill-will,
Naught abates the curse to the race in its after-teeming :
But so it runs as when the surge,
Blasts of Thrace rude-blowing urge,
Runs over the unilluminable abysses creaming ;
The murk sea-banks it rolls and tumbles ;
All the coast along the main,
Brow-belaboured, moans and rumbles
In the stress of hurricane.

(*1st Counter-turn.*)

I' th' house of the Labdakidai distress, from days of eld,
Piled upon distress of the dead men have I beheld :
Ne'er hath race of the father a race of the son redeemèd.
The stroke of God dismantles it ;
Nor can ransom paid acquit.
O'er Œdipus uttermost residue of a root there beamèd
A light ; but lo ! now 'tis levelled
By the dues to Death-Gods flung
— Bloody dust,[100] a mind bedevilled,
And the folly of the tongue !

(*2nd Turn.*)
O Zeus! what trespass of human daring
Thy majestical reign can master?
Sleep runneth not faster,—
Sleep that is all-ensnaring;

Nor the unwearied months mysterious.
Majesty aye unagèd with time,
That reign'st controlling amidst imperious
Glory of light the Olympian clime!

'Tis a law no morrow, days to come,
Nor days of the past, reverse:
That which is grown beyond the sum
Enormous in human state, it is no more free from curse.

(*2nd Counter-turn.*)
The rolling-stone of an elf Surmise [110]
Proves of many a man the saving;
But eke she belies
Many a madcap craving:

She to deceit the fool unwary
Draws till he singe his feet in the flame.
Because in wisdom a man declarèd
Ages ago this word of fame:

To the fool comes late or soon a season
When better appears the worse;
It is a God misguides his reason:
And little enough the time that he goes uncaught i' th' curse. [111]



CHORUS (*march measure*).

See though! Haemon, latest begot of
All thy children, arrives. Is he groaning
Over the lot of
Antigone, the betrothed, his sweetheart,
[*Enter* HAEMON.
The defrauded bridal bemoaning?

Cre. We soon shall know more sure than any seer.[112]
Not frantic with your father, lad, to hear
Your bride's consummate sentence? Are not you
And I good friends whichever way I do?
Hae. Sir, I am yours. My thoughts you still direct
In virtue, and I'll follow with respect;
For never any marriage I shall prize
More worth my winning than your guidance wise.
Cre. Ay, lad, so keeps the heart in state of grace!
All else behind a father's will has place.
For to this end men pray the sons they breed
May prove at home no disobedient seed,
That like their sires they be avenged with hurt
Upon the foe and prize the friend's desert.
Breeding unprofitable children, what
But trouble shall you say a man has got—
Trouble for him and for his foes loud laughter?
Never, my lad, for pleasure, running after
Woman make jettison of your wits! Be sure,
A chilly sort of armful you secure
When a bad woman is your bedfellow
At home. So near—and false! What sore
can go



More deep? Oh, spew her out, as though she were
Your foe—dismiss the girl to Hades, there
To get a bridegroom! Since, when I have found
her
Alone rebel when all were loyal round her,
Liar I will not make myself in the eyes
Of all, but kill. So let her cant of ties—
Her Zeus-of-kindred! Why, if I'm to feed
Homebred disorder, much more the alien breed!
The man that's virtuous in the household sphere,
Will also honest citizen appear.
But one shall never conquer my applause
Who oversteps and does despite to laws,
Or dreams of playing master o'er the powers.
Whomso the nation might set up, 'tis ours,
In the least things, tho' right or wrong, to obey.
And such a man will be, I'm bold to say,
As fit to rule as to be ruled he's ready;
And in the storm of battle he'll be steady
To hold his post, a comrade brave and true.
Undiscipline!—No plague of blacker hue!
This undoes nations, this makes desolate
Households, 'tis this can breach confederate
Array in rout; but men well broken-in
Most lives deliver by their discipline.
So by the cause of order must I stand.
Never! a woman get the upper hand?
Nay, better, if needs must, be overthrown
By man, at least no woman's mastery own!

L. of Cho. Unless by Time our wit's purloined away,
You say with understanding what you say.

Hae. Father, the Gods make understanding grow
In men, to be the best gift they bestow.



I could not—and I would I never might—
Gainsay you that you do not say aright;
Yet no bad thing may strike another too.
Leastways, I being your son am bound for you
To observe what's found to chide, what's done and said.
You have a look these townsmen fellows dread,
At any tale which may not please your ear;
But I can listen in the dark and hear
How for this maiden all the people wail—
Never did woman's worth so little avail!
She withers foully thanks to deeds most rare,
Because, her own-born brother in warfare
Fallen, she would not leave him uninterred
For dogs of prey to spoil or any bird.
Is she not worthy of a golden prize?
So, quietly, the dusky rumour flies.
For my part, father, than your good success,
Nothing's more precious that I could possess.
What greater ornament can deck his heirs
Than flower of sire's good name, or him than theirs?
Take not for all your wear one single mood,
Your sole dictate for sum of rectitude:
For whoso deems himself the one man wise
Above the rest in tongue or spirit to rise,
Being perused, looks void before all eyes.
Learn much: 'tis nothing shameful even if
A man be clever, that; and be not stiff
To excess. You see by torrent-courses how
The tree that stoops keeps safe and sound his bough;
The stiff opposing founder, stock and all.



Ev'n so the sailor who too taut shall haul
The sheet, and still to yield an inch refuse—
Capsized, thwarts downward, he will end his cruise.
Oh, yield from wrath, give alteration play!
Because—if, being the younger, judge I may—
I hold 'twould be by long precedence best
Were man of perfect knowledge born possest;
However, since 'tis not the way things turn,
'Tis well to take good prompting and to learn.

L. of Cho. Sir, you might learn of him, as well as teach,
When to the point he speaks. There's sense in each.

Cre. We, at our age, shall we be brought forsooth
To reason by the schooling of this youth?

Hae. —Not to do wrong. I'm young, ay; but 'tis hard
You should my date and not my feats regard.

Cre. A feat! to honour breach of discipline!

Hae. Not even common rights I'd claim for *sin.*

Cre. And is she not to that disease a prey?

Hae. The universal people of Thebes gainsay.

Cre. The people are to teach me how to reign?

Hae. There spoke a voice of hotspur youth, most plain!

Cre. A king, and look beyond my own control?

Hae. No commonwealth where one man owns the whole.

Cre. The lord is deemed the commonwealth to own.

Hae. How well you'd rule in empty lands, alone!

Cre. 'Tis clear: he's with the woman, hand-in-glove.

Hae. If you're a woman!—All for you's my love.

Cre. Arch-villain! Bandy words against your father?

Hae. From doing wrong, misled, I'd save him rather.

Cre. Misled?—in honouring the sway that's mine?

Hae. No honour if you trample on rights divine.
Cre. O scurvy nature, cowed before a wench!
Hae. At facing shame you shall not find me blench.
Cre. This plea of yours is all for her sake though.
Hae. Your sake, and mine, and of the Gods below!
Cre. With her alive I'll never have you wed.
Hae. Die then she must—but have her victim, dead.
Cre. What's that? So bold? You run to threats from pleas?
Hae. Is it a threat to plead with void decrees?
Cre. Void of advice, I'll teach you to advise!
Hae. Were you not father, I'd have said *Not wise.*
Cre. You woman's-chattel, never seek to coax!
Hae. You speak, but hear not what your speech provokes.
Cre. So, in good sooth? Now by the heaven that roofs,
You shall not gaily chide me with reproofs.
Fetch out this pest, that she may die outright
Beside her bridegroom, near him, in his sight!
Hae. Beside me, near me, she shall ne'er be slain—
Oh, never think it!—and you ne'er again
My living presence face to face shall view.
Rave on with such as care to keep with you!
[*Exit violently.*
L. of Cho. The man is gone, Sir, in the haste of rage:
And hearts when grieved will rankle, at that age.
Cre. Let him go do his superhuman will!
Life for this pair he shall not purchase still.
L. of Cho. Nay, kill both of them? Will you so proceed?
Cre. Not her that had no hand in't. Right, indeed!
L. of Cho. And by what manner is her death decreed?



Cre. Somewhere from human walk sequestered lone,
I'll mew her up alive in crypt of stone,
Just food enough allotted to absolve (1118)
And not with taint the commonwealth involve.
There—since she worships none but Death—she'll cry
To him; perhaps he will not let her die!
Else, now at last, she'll learn 'tis waste of breath
To render worship t'ward the realm of Death!
[*Exit.*

CHORUS.

(*Turn.*)

When Love disputes
He carries his battles!
Love he loots
The rich of their chattels!
By delicate cheeks
On maiden's pillow
Watches he all the night-time long;
His prey he seeks
Over the billow,
Pastoral haunts he preys among.
Gods are deathless, and they
Cannot elude his whim;
And oh! amid us whose life's a day,
Mad is the heart that broodeth him!

(*Counter-turn.*)

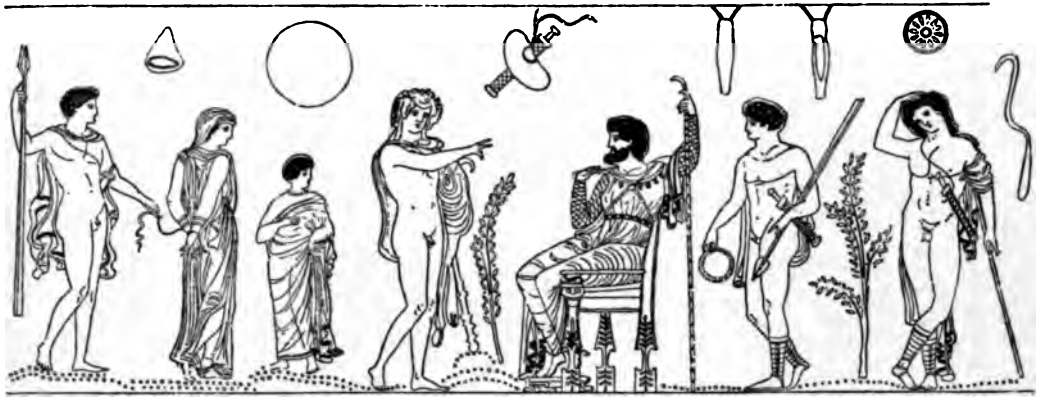
And Love can splay
Uprightest of virtue;
Lead astray,
Better to hurt you!
'Tis he did the wrong,
'Tis he beguilèd
Father and son to feud so dire.
Desire's too strong!
—Out of the eyelid
Peeped of a lovely bride, Desire!
He with Law has a court,
Sovran in might with her.
Divine Aphroditè wreaks her sport;
Who will be bold to fight with her?

[*Enter* ANTIGONE, *guarded.*



CHORUS (*march measure*).

Ah, though! to behold such a sight as is here,
I am carried beyond the commandment's bar!
No more can I hinder the gush of the tear.
To the chamber of bridal where all the dead are
I see Antigone hasting.



Haemon. You have a look these townsmen fellows dread
At any tale which may not please your ear;
But I can listen in the dark and hear
How for this maiden all the people wail—

(*They sing the following* DIRGE *in antiphons.*)

DIRGE.

(*1st Turn.*)

Ant. (*sings*). Look! You that keep
The land I was born in,
Soon my lattermost goal I gain,
This my lattermost light of morning;
Now—ne'er hereafter again.
Death hath all men's rest in his giving,
Home to shores of Àcheron he
Carries me, living.
Ay me!
Never to me there was granted
Marriage melody, ne'er upon
Me was a bridal chant chanted;
Bride will I be to Àcheron!

(*Marching Measure, 1st Stanza.*)

Cho. Therefore very famous and full of renown
Thou'rt passing away to the charnel-cave;
For none like thee yet alive goes down
So free of herself to the Prince of the Grave;
Not paid with the wage of the sword for reward,
Nor smitten of sicknesses wasting.



(*1st Counter-turn.*)

Ant. Of women dead
Never I listened
Tale more sad than the Phrygian guest,[114]
Wife to Tantalus—her that's prisoned
High, near to Sipylos' crest.
Like the clutch of ivy, the growing
Stone subdued her: pillar of ooze,
Rain everflowing
Bedews!
Snows that eternally heaping,
Down from blubbered eyelids fall,
Ever a breast of stone steeping!
Rest that is liker mine than all!

(*Marching Measure, 2nd Stanza.*)

Cho. But divine was she and divine was her birth;
While we are but mortal and children of earth,
Why, sure there is honour enough in the story—
"*She in her life and her death gained glory,*
Like terms with the Godlike tasting."

(*2nd Turn.*)

Ant. (*sings*). Ye mock me then !
Why will ye face to face torment me
Before I be parted ?
O ye Gods o' my grand-
sire's land !
Shame upon home and the homebred men,
Dowered with plenty !

O Dircè founts, and O domain
Of Thebe, Lady of Lash and Bit,[115]
(All forsake me, but you I gain)
Witness it !—

—How dies by friends unwept a maiden,
How the doom
Consigns me to the barrow-laden
Cloister of strange charnel-room.

Cry woe !
Dismally forbidden
Human abode or ghost-
ly coast,
From dead men hidden
As from living, I
Must lie !

(*3rd Turn.*)

Cho. The edge of daring thou wouldst tread ;
But 'gainst the Law's high pedestal
Ruinously, O my child, didst fall !
Perchance sire's venture[116] wreaked on children's head.



(*2nd Counter-turn.*)

Ant. Thou touchest there
Sorrowfullest of meditation.
The griefs of my father,
Tale thrice-hackneyed again
Of pain :
Children of Labdakos all, we bear
This tribulation.

Alas for curse on mother's bed !
For those incestuous hours of his,
His disaster and hers who bred
Miseries !

What parentage was mine, engendered
From such stem !
And now I go my way surrendered—
Curst, unwed—to lodge with them.

Cry woe !
Fie, what bridal, brother,
This that the fates decree
For thee !
Dead thou slay'st another !
Dead, the living still
Canst kill !

(*3rd Counter-turn.*)

Cho. He's leal to God that's leal at all : [117]
But whoso is of power possess'd
Can noway brook his power transgress'd.
A self-willed passion, daughter, caused thy fall.



(*Aftersong.*)

Ant. Unwept for, without any to befriend me,
Sore at heart, unhymned as a bride!
Forth they lead: the way is wide.
Far from the holy sun's eye will they send me,
Solitarily banned to languish!
None bemoans my tearless anguish,
No near and dear ones at my side.

Re-enter CREON.

Cre. Know you, these songs and dirges before death
Will never cease if one allow them breath?
Quick then, away with her! Folded and hidden
Within the vaulted grave, as you were bidden,
Leave her alone, forsaken—if she choose,
To die, or 'neath that roof to sepulchre
Alive: I wash my hands concerning her;
But leave to lodge in the light I will refuse.

Ant. O grave! bride-chamber! everlasting cell!
Burrow in the rock! whither I go to dwell—
And join mine own, the perished number whom
Phersephassa hath lodged in dead-men's room.
I, last of all and woefullest by much,
Descend before my date of days I touch.
Yet, there arrived, sure hope I have to greet
In love my father; loving welcome meet,
Mother, from you; and love from you, my brother! (118)

For when you died, it was my hand, none other,
Did laver and ceremony and funeral cup
Bestow; and now your bones I covered up,



My Polyneices, and behold my wage!
[And yet 'twas good to honour you, a sage
Counsel will say. No—not for a child I'd bred,
Not, had it been a husband weltering, dead—
Would I have braved the world and done this task!
What law was this which so required?—you ask:
Successor had been found to husband dead;
Child by another man, in lost child's stead:
But, father and mother in death deposited,
To be my brother none could e'er arise.
Such was the law made me prefer and prize
You most!—which Creon judged a sinner's part
And dread presumption, O my brother-heart!
And now he carries me in close arrest,
Unbedded and unchanted, unpossest
Of marriage lot or bringing up of sons:
Ill-starred creature, forlorn, that kindred shuns,
Living I reach my burrowed dead-men's cage.] (119)
What heavenly covenant did I outrage?
Why should I any more my dismal eye
Uplift to Gods? on whom for succour cry?
My loyal act has reaped disloyalty!
Well, well, if this be good in sight of God,
We'll learn to feel our sins beneath his rod;
If *they*'re the sinners—no worse let them be
Done by, than they've unjustly done to me!

TRIO and SOLO *in march measure.*

Cho. Still is the storm of the soul not gone,
Still wild winds in her heart are flying.
Cre. Some shall have cause for weeping anon,
That go to their office unwilling!
Ant. Ay me! 'tis a word that attains very near,
This, unto dying!
Cre. I can comfort ye not, nor forbid you to fear
'Tis a fate will be soon a-fulfilling!

SOLO.

Ant. Town of my sires in the country of Thebé,
Gods of my fathers!
They lead me away: no more I await.
Witnesses, Theban princes, will yé be:
Last of the race of your kings, desolate,
You see what I am, what are they, what a fate
My faith to fidelity gathers!
[*Exit guarded.*







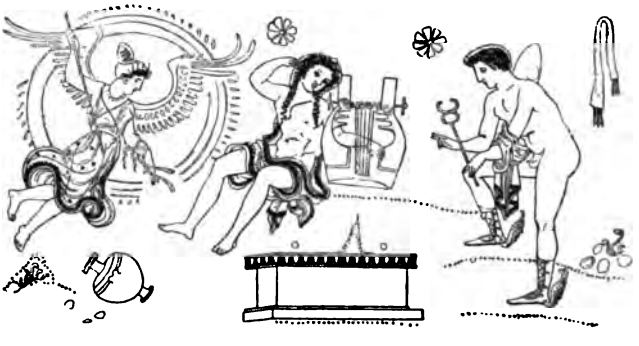
Zeus to her did impart
To treasure a golden
Shower of the Seed.



CHORUS.[120]

(*1st Turn.*)

Even so Danaë,
Beautiful as she was,
Bore to barter away
The light in a court of brass.
She to the yoke was holden:
Piled as a tomb her bridal room,
Deep sequestered apart.
Yet hers was a famous line;
Zeus to her did impart
To treasure a golden
Show'r of his seed.
Strange and mighty indeed
The ways of the Will Divine!
There's neither wealth, nor war, nor sable
Surge-belaboured ships at sea,
Nor fortress is able
To escape what is to be.



(*1st Counter-turn.*)
Dryas' son [121] to the yoke
Bowed, the Edonian king—
Sharp of gall to provoke,
Hasty the taunt to fling:
Him Dionysus fences
Captive alone in bonds of stone;
Leaves him there to distil
The mettle of tempers crazed,
The efflorescence of ill!
And, brought to his senses,
He rued that he had
Harmed a God with his mad
Hands, and the taunt he phrased;—
Who fain would stay the routs that scamper
Loud with Bacchanalian fires,
And dared to tamper
With the Muses' piping quires.



(*2nd Turn.*)

There is a place at the Dusky-blue Rocks where an ocean-floor
Gulfs twin seas in a race, 'tis the Bosporus' churlish shore,
Salmydêssus of Thrace:
There did Arès
(For his home is neighbour of these)
Witness a wound of damn'd disgrace—
A sightless, maimed
Wound which cruel consort[122] aimed
At th' eyes of Phineus' sons, yet to be avenged of God!
The stepsons' eyes
Did her bloody hands deface
With a tool devised
From dagger-pointed weaving-rod.



(*2nd Counter-turn.*)
Piteously they in a pitiful agony tears did shed,
Wasting ever away, for a mother's sake unwed.[123]
Yet by seed she could lay
Claim to her place
In the old Erechtheïd race ;[124]
She in a cave long leagues away
Was reared, a child
Amidst paternal whirlwinds wild,
—The Northwind's daughter, courser-fleet upon the hill !
Her sire a God :
And still the Dooms of ancient day,
My daughter, trod
Hard and hard upon her, still.

Enter TEIRESIAS, *blind, walking by the help of his serving-boy.*

Tei. Princes of Thebé, we have made combined
Journey, one pair of eyes for both: the blind
Obeys his guide—'tis all the walk he has.
Cre. And what's your tidings, old Teiresias?
Tei. I will advise you: listen to my lore.
Cre. Have I not held with your advice before?
Tei. —And steered aright the commonwealth thereby.
Cre. To your good service I can testify.
Tei. (*solemnly*). Take heed! you balance on a blade of chance.
Cre. What's this? I shiver at such utterance.
Tei. Listen: the signals of my art will teach.
My ancient seat of auguries I reach
(Haven which all the tell-tale wings decoys),
And hear of birds an unfamiliar noise.
Some ugly jabbering torment pricked their cries;
Each tore and clawed at each in murderous wise—
I knew, for I could read the whirr of wings.
Forthwith alarmed, I tried burnt-offerings
On altars full-embrased: no fire upsprings
Clear from the sacrifice, but o'er the embers
Weltered only a rheum of oozy members,
And fumed and spewed; and scattered flew the gall
Upon the air, the moulting thigh bones all
Loll from their fatty envelope revealed.
My divinations droop, my mysteries yield
No answer—so the stripling signified,
Who stands to me, as I to others, guide.



This malady on the state your will has thrown.
Our every hearth, our every altar-stone
Is rank with carrion, dogs and birds may fetch
From Œdipus' dead son, the luckless wretch.
Therefore the Gods against our prayers are turned,
Our prayers and sacrifice of members burned.
No bird whistles his call of warning plain,
Battened on succulent carnage of the slain.
These things, my son, consider. It is the way
Of all mankind alike to go astray:
But when a man has erred, he is no more
Unblest nor unadvised, if the sore
Case he shall cure and not refuse to budge.
For *Stubbornness is folly*, says the judge.
Yield to the dead man! Do not stab the slain!
What prowess this, to kill the dead again?
Good will, good words—and oh, the sweetness of it,
Good words to hear, and find them words of profit!

Cre. Old man, I'm butt for you to level at
Like archers all. Seercraft?—Not even of that
Untraded! By such fellows long enough
Have I been bought and sold like merchant's stuff.
Profit away! and traffic all you can,
Sardian electre (125) and gold of Hindustan!
You shall not in a grave install the man
—Tho' to the throne of Zeus, Zeus' eagle-brood
Ravening, shall please to carry him for food:
I will not fear defilement even so,
Nor yield him sepulture. For well I know,
No man's so strong that Gods he can defile.
But, old Teiresias, there awaits a vile

Fall for your mighty cunning ones, who make
Vile pleas and gloze them fair, for profit's sake!

Tei. Fie!
Lives there the man, can know, can apprehend

Cre. (*scornful*). Know what? How might this general precept end?

Tei. —How far good counsel is the best of treasure?

Cre. And *bad's* worst loss: no doubt in just such measure!

Tei. Yet with this malady your condition's rank.

Cre. With taunt for taunt the seer I would not thank.

Tei. You do! As false my prophecy you describe.

Cre. Prophets, they're all a money-loving tribe!

Tei. The tyrant's brood love dirty pilferings.

Cre. Know you that what you speak is spoken of kings?

Tei. I know: this realm I taught you how to save.

Cre. A skilful seer, but likes to play the knave.

Tei. You'll have me tell what deep in heart I've shrined.

Cre. Rifle your shrine—but not for profit, mind!

Tei. That much, I think, for your part, is secured.

Cre. You shall not buy-and-sell me, rest assured.

Tei. Rest very well assured you shall not run
Many another emulous wheel of the sun,
Ere you'll have rendered up, dead man for dead
Atoning, one from your own bowels bred:
For that you have brought low which was on high,
And foully in the grave put life to lie;
While *him* you keep, of the Under Gods' demesne
Disfranchised, undispensed, a corpse unclean.
For duty untouched by you (by the High Gods too[126]
Untouched, unless they must, outraged of you),



—For that, the mutilator fiends of Hell,
Retributors, are bid by Heaven as well
Beset your path till you likewise be lost.
Examine well, if I be silver-crost
To speak it! Lapse of no long time shall rouse
Wailings of men and women in your house.
And through all realms the word for war is given,
Whose mangled losses dog and beast have shriven;[127]
Or feathered fowls to each man's country bear
Hearthwards the filthy stench to leave it there.
Here's archery—since you made my soul to smart—
Arrows of anger levelled at the heart,
Unerring, and you shall not dodge the sting!
But lead me home, my lad, and let him sling
His anger upon heads of younger date,
And learn to train a tongue more temperate
And better senses than his present state.
[*Exit, led by the serving-boy.*

L. of Cho. Sir, he is gone—but after prophesying
Grim things. In all the length of days a-dyeing
My hair from black to white, declare I do,
Never his public word was found untrue.

Cre. I know it, too: my soul's perplexed with doubt.
To yield is frightful; yet, by standing out,
O frightful choice!—must pride in ruin break?

L. of Cho. Son of Menoeceus, the good counsel take!

Cre. What must I do then? Speak, and I will follow.

L. of Cho. Go free the maiden from her dungeon hollow,
And lay the exposèd body to his rest.

Cre. Approve you so? You judge surrender best?

A. Ay, Sir, and no time lost! Swift-footed press
The hurts of Heaven to seize on foolishness.
Cre. Oh, hard! I leave my will behind, and do it:
Who struggles with necessity must rue it.
L. of Chs. Go then and do, and trust it not to others.
Cre. (*suddenly much agitated*). Ev'n as I am, I'll on!
Up, every mother's
Son,[220] or no son, of you! Up! Up! henchmen all,
Away with you, axe in hand, to yonder knoll!
And I, since resolution so comes round,
I will release in person whom I bound.
To keep the laws of use and wont, I doubt
But that's the best of all, till life be out.

[*Exit.*



DIONYSUS WITH HIS THIASOS OF SATYRS AND MAENADS



From a Vase in the British Museum. ***5th Century*** B.C.



CHORUS.[129]

(*1st Turn.*)

To the glory and joy of Cadmus' daughter praise upraise!
Many-titled! Thunderer Zeus'
Begotten offspring! Charged to ward
Italy's famous land, and lord
O'er the mother-lap of Eleusis
Where a world resorts
Worshipping in Dêô's courts.[130]
For Thebe is all thine own,
Bacchus' Bacchanal town,
By sliding smooth Ismenian sluices,
Soil of cruel Dragon sown!

(*1st Counter-turn.*)

And the murkily glow'ring flambeaux' flash hath seen thy mien
O'er the twin-topt crest of the mountain,
Whereon the Nymphs Corycian[131] play
(Votaries all of Bacchus they),
Met beside the Castaly fountain.
And the Nysa[132] steeps,
Banks whereon the ivy heaps,
(While tongues superhuman phrase
Jubilation of praise)
And vineyards cluster'd thick beyond counting
Speed thee home to Theban ways.



(*2nd Turn.*)

She loved us more than any nation,
She that died in thunder,[133] and thou
Lov'st us dearly: come! for we
Caught in grips of a malady rude
Labour all in our multitude.
O pass with feet of purification
Down along Parnassian brow,
Or by the moaning firth of sea![134]

(*2nd Counter-turn.*)

Arise! Thou, who lead'st to pleasure
Troops of stars[135] whose breath is a fire!
Marshal of the uproarious night!
Child of Zeus! The begotten of God!
Bring thy votaries wild, who trod
For thee the nightlong ecstasy-measure;
Steward of their hearts'-desire!
Bacchus! Arise! Appear to sight!



Enter a MESSENGER.

Mes. Neighbours to Cadmus' and Amphion's roof,
Never with commendation or reproof
Any estate in lives of men I'll hail:
For Chance may lift and Chance may dip the scale
Of fortune and misfortune any day.
No earthly seer the Appointed can foresay.
For Creon's lot, time was, I used to count
Worth coveting: he throned it paramount
In Thebè, ruled the land which he did save;
And shewed, with flower of noble children, brave.
And all foregone! For let a man forsake
His joys—no more account of him I make
As living: he's a dead man, breathing still!
Keep a proud house and costly, if you will,
And keep a kingly style; if thus you live
And have no joy of it, I would not give—
For all but that—the shadow of a smoke!

L. of Cho. You've news? What more to afflict our royal folk?

Mes. Deaths! And the guilt upon a living head.

L. of Cho. But who's the murderer, and who's the dead?

Mes. Haemon, by hands familiar overthrown.

L. of Cho. By the hand of his father, or his own?

Mes. His own, enraged by murder against his sire.

L. of Cho. Seer, what direct event your words require!

Mes. Deal with it as you will, so stands the thing.

L. of Cho. But look, the unhappy consort of our king,
Eurydice, is with us! This advance
Abroad—is't tidings of her son, or chance?

Enter EURYDICE *from the Palace.*

Eur. O burghers all, I overheard your talk
As I for Pallas' fane set on my walk
To seek the Goddess and in prayer adore.
And as I slipt the latch and drew the door
To open, sounds of household misery smite
Upon my ear: I sank, for very affright,
Back on my waiting-women and swooned outright.
Tell me again, tho',—I can bear, because
I'm trained in sorrow—what the story was?

Mes. Dear Madam, what I shall tell I did behold,
And not a syllable of the truth withhold.
Why should I phrase you soft, and Time display
My tale a liar's? Truth's the straightest way!
I brought your consort's feet, attending him,
Where Polyneices on the plain-land's rim
Yet lay, a corpse, dog-worried, pitiless.
Then to the Lady of Crossways (136) we address
Prayer, and to Pluto, mercifully to abate
Their wrath; and, laved with laver immaculate,
In fresh-pulled boughs the poor remains consume;
Of native mould a straight-capt barrow-tomb
We heaped, and next we turned to seek the cave,
That stony-paven bridal-bower of the grave.
A voice we heard, far off; a clear lament
Up from the unfuneralled gallery-chamber (137) went:
Which one drew near the king to signify.
The same unmeaning miserable cry
Enveloped his approach. He groaned a strain
Sad as a dirge to utter, *Grief and pain!*



Am I a prophet? Does this journey bode
Disaster worse than any bygone road?
My son! His voice caresses me! Go near,—
Quick!—servants!—place you by the tomb, and peer!
That joint in the barrow-mound—that rocky breach,
In with you there! On till the mouth you reach—
See if I know his voice, or Gods delude!
Urged by our downcast lord's solicitude,
We peered. In the after-part of the sepulchre,
Hung by the neck, we first had sight of her,
Clipt by a thready halter-knot of lawn.
He, with his arms about her middle drawn,
Clung fast—the match undone among the dead
Bemoaning, father's acts, the dismal bed.
He, when he saw his son, with sullen moan
Comes in to him; then loud in dirge-like tone,
O wretch! What handiwork has here been wrought?
What meant you? Where's the stroke that so distraught?
Come out. I supplicate, beseech—my child!
But the boy stared at him with eyeballs wild,
Spat in his face, and answered not a word,
But tugged the cross hilt-pieces of his sword.
His father—whipt away in flight—he missed:
But then and there, self-maddened, turned his wrist
And leaned—the blade plunged midway in his side! [*Exit* EURYDICE.
Close to his failing arms he folds his bride,
Yet conscious: panting forth an eager flood,
Dyes the white cheek with crimson gouts of blood;

And dead about the dead he lies—poor boy!
His marriage-rite only in the grave to enjoy:
Preaching to all the world how thoughtlessness
Is worst of ills that can a man possess.

L. of Cho. What may you make of this? My lady, fled
Back—not a word, or good or evil, said?

Mes. Well, I'm amazed! And yet on hopes I fare:
Her son's sad news received, she will not care
To wail at large, but close-retired prepare
Her maids to mourn a private grief with her.
She does not want for sense, that she should err.

L. of Cho. I know not: too much silence is no less
Ill circumstance than cries in vain excess.

Mes. Well, we shall know—maybe in secret fashion
She covers with restraint a heart of passion—
If we advance and enter. Ay, I'm with you:
Your too much silence, that is ominous too.

[*Exit.*

CHORUS (*march measure*).

See tho'—the king in person advances.
Yon monument whereupon he's bending,
(God forgive me!) of none's mischances
Tells tale but his own offending.



Enter CREON *with attendants carrying the body of* HAEMON *on a bier.*

DIRGE.

(*Turn A.*)

Cre. Heigho!
The fool's retribution—
Wise fool![138]—for sin,
Deathly, pitilessly will'd!
See we pass, all akin:
Yet some here be killers
And some be killed.
Woe for the wise presuming,
Misfortunate!
O lad freshly blooming!
Fresh-fallen fate!
Not thy folly but mine,
To death's dissolution
Thee doth resign.

Cho. How all too late the right you now divine!

(*Turn B.*)

Cre. Ay me!
Oh all too well I know it! Yet methinks, these days
A God heavily 'lighting
Has oppressed my brain:
He smote and hurried me along bloodthirsty ways,
Ay me! Spurned my pleasure, wrecked what I'd upraise.
O man, man! doomed to fighting
Pain, toil and pain!

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]



Mes. She at the altar's base with whetted blade
Relaxed her darkling eyelids. Loud she made
Lament for Megareus,[140] nobly doomed before,
And then for *him* ; and last on you she laid,
Who killed her sons, a spell of trouble in store.



"That stony-paven bridal-bower of the grave"

[illegible]

[illegible] Ah me ah me!
[illegible] I'm [illegible] with!
[illegible] Why comes there none
[illegible] strike [illegible] my breast with
[illegible] two-edged blade?
[illegible] me miserable me!
[illegible] anguish to anguish
[illegible] My sorrows are heaped!

Me. Ah, for the guilt of sins and that blood shed
[illegible] you quenched by her that now is sped.
Ch. After what words and did she depart?
Me. Her soul went suicidal home to the heart,
[illegible] she did with a gruesomely dead.

[illegible]

Ch. Ah me! never in other
Name, most mankind,
The furies that smother
Me shall they bind.
'Twas I, I that slew thee
O cruel case!;
Confest, I did undo thee!
Oh, forth the place
Remove, hurry me, loving
Hands, forth convey!
Say ne'er *He's as nothing*—
He is not, say!

L. of Chs. Counsel of gain—if gain's here any more:
Least is the best of troubles at the door.



(*Counter-turn C.*)

Cre. Draw nigh, anigh!
Approach doom supremest,
So dear and great
Beyond all thou seemest;
Lead on with thee
Unambiguous fate!
And these eyes no longer
Sunlight shall see.

L. of Cho. That's yet to come: we've here enough to adjust
In hand. The rest may lie where lie it must.

Cre. On that I doat,[141] which all my prayer exprest.

L. of Cho. Then pray no more! Man gets, as Fate likes best,
A lot; and stays perforce thereof possest.

(*Counter-turn D.*)

Cre. Away, forth convey the
Rash fool, away!
I ne'er meant to slay thee,
Child, I did slay.
And her too! I slew them!
O cruel case!
I've no heart to view them;
No resting-place.
To wry ends abhorrèd
Swerves all I touch:
And Doom round my forehead,
Swooped, keeps his clutch.

FINALE (*in march measure*)

Cho. Wisdom's a great way first in the making
Of a happy estate! No duty to God
Leave unacquitted. Great boasts breaking
From presumptuous men, for reward taking
Great stripes of the rod,
Bring a fool in his age to th' awaking.
[*Exeunt omnes.*

COMMENTARY

KING ŒDIPUS

[1] The suppliant carried a branch tufted with flocks of wool, and laid it upon the altar or altar-steps. So to 'deposit your branch' was a synonym for to come with a suppliant's petition (Demosthenes, *de Corona*). The successful suppliant removed his branch. [2] *i.e.* thank-offering from such as have escaped the plague. [3] Others interpret the Greek word by 'acquiescence.' [4] *i.e.* a public deputation. [5] Known respectively as Athena *Oncaia* and Athena *Ismenia*. [6] Altar of Apollo on the bank of the Ismenus, where divination by fire was practised. [7] *i.e.* the Plague of Fever personified. [8] "Perhaps at these words the actor prostrates himself at the King's feet" (*Scholiast*). [9] "We see that men of experience have more success by their flukes than the inexperienced and theoretical men," says Aristotle (*Metaph.* 981a 14). The Chorus Leader is flattering Œdipus' favourite weakness—conceit in his own mother-wit. [10] Imitated in Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* ii. 633. [11] See Aristoph. *Plutus*, 21. [12] Creon equivocates because the first word spoken by a newcomer, especially on a solemn occasion, is an omen: a bad word might bring bad luck. [13] For the improbability of Œdipus' ignorance, see Jebb's Introd.

p. xxv. [14] A very fine example of the 'Sophoclean irony.' Œdipus has heard only a moment before that it was 'robbers,' yet by a slip of the tongue he uses the singular; and the audience thinks of *him*. [15] Already a suspicion of Creon's complicity. [16] So the Greek, literally; but, in fact, the ceremony was an asperging with a brand dipped in holy water (cf. Eur. *Hercules*, 922). [17] The Scholiast calls this particular example of Sophoclean irony 'rather sensational than in keeping with the grand manner,' and thinks it worthier of Euripides than Sophocles. [18] An intentional equivoque: the Greek phrase conveys either "*your wife*," or "*your temper*." [19] The abruptness of this question betrays a suspicion long entertained. [20] See *Philoctetes*, 138. [21] Properly an itinerant minister of the orgiastic worship of the Great Mother (Cybele), introduced from Asia and already strong in popular favour. [22] The Sphinx. *κύων* is used with great freedom in metaphor, *e.g.* of eagles (Aesch.), of harpies (Ap. Rhod.), of the god Pan (Pindar). *Balladmonger*, because she had installed herself in the public place of Thebes like a rhapsode come to recite. [23] *i.e.* not a slave or resident alien, who might not defend themselves in person, but must be represented by their master or patron. [24] Apollo, son of Zeus. [25] For the bull as the type of surly moping, see Jebb's examples. [26] I have not rendered the two slightly different measures in these stanzas (change from choriambics to ionics): both express the agitating debate in the mind of the Chorus between the authority of Œdipus and that of Teiresias. They conclude by ranging themselves provisionally with the King in his distrust of prophets, therein typifying the agnostic intellectuals



of Athens, who did not deny the supernatural, but discredited any claim by one man to be its interpreter more than any other. [27] This obscure phrase is most probably explained by Schneidewin's reference to Aelian H. A. 7, 48 : *to take count of a place by calculation of stars* = to avoid it. [28] The Chorus, whose perpetual rôle is to stand for the unprejudiced average, and who have only doubtfully inclined to take sides with Œdipus against Teiresias, are now shocked into a timid normal piety. They sing the dangers of Pride, ὕβρις, of which one aspect is the tyrannous usage of Creon by Œdipus, and another — intellectual pride — is the scepticism of Œdipus and still more of Jocasta (pp. l, li). [29] *i.e.* Œdipus' ordeal with the Sphinx : they fear the popular hero may now be overthrown. [30] Because prevailing impiety is a public danger, may be visited upon all ; indeed, if it is not visited with punishment, what meaning is left in religious exercises ?—"*Why tread we a measure ?*" [31] The three great shrines—Delphi, the Navel stone ; Abae, in Phocis (Herod. viii. 33), and Olympia. [32] Literally, 'wife in full complement' ; a house without master or without children was called ἡμιτελής, 'at half complement.' [33] See Note 12. [34] For an exhaustive account of the recognition of *Τύχη* as a goddess, and, in later Greek times, her supreme importance, see Rohde, *Der Griechische Roman*, &c., p. 276. [35] *i.e.* I was a castaway and am now a king. [36] As in *Ajax* and in *Antigone*, just before the disaster a false hope lures the Chorus to sing an ode of exultation. They jump at the guess that Œdipus is a child of some nymph (these are the '*folk undying*'—cf. Aesch. in P. V. 553, of the nymphs in his chorus) by one of the pastoral gods

—Pan, Apollo, Hermes, or Bacchus. [37] *i.e.* the autumnal equinox. [38] In allusion to the chorus on p. 43. [39] Providence personified in a *Δαίμων*. It may be the Daemon of a family or of an individual; the conception varies between a Destiny, a Genius, a Guardian Angel, and a possessing Fiend.

ŒDIPUS UP AT COLONOS

[40] Athens — that is, Attica according to the heroic nomenclature. [41] For the names and attributes of the Eumenides, see Warr's *Aeschylus*. [42] A natural chasm here, perhaps originally volcanic, reputed (like most such places) an entrance to the underworld, had its adit paved with steps of bronze or brass (see Jebb's notes on *O. C.* 57 and 1690). [43] A statue of Colonos is shewn on the stage. The name merely means *hill*, but the Greeks, of course, invented an eponymous hero, as it were an original *Mr. Hill*, to personalise the spot in legend: just as the 'Secret Isle' became the goddess Calypso. [44] v. Aesch. *Eum.* 107. [45] Because 'nothing would satisfy him' (as we would say), but he must commit this sacrilegious trespass. [46] Literally, 'giving speechless vent to the reverence in their heart.' [47] See 42. [48] The dactylic monody, "the latest development of the dactylic measure," only appears once in Sophocles (*Philoctetes*, 1196), except here. It is a concession—like all this amœbæan passage of lyrics—to a change of taste at Athens. The disintegration of Tragedy moved in two directions, led by Euripides—towards the Prose Drama and towards the Opera. The public desired bravuras



in which fashionable singers might shine in the execution of increasingly complicated music. In such passages it is idle to look for much pure literary effect in the bare surviving *libretto*. Some ancient editors denied the authenticity of Antigone's solo and the following four lines. [49] The bracketed lines look rather like an alternative version. [50] "Thessalian felts were excellent," says the Scholiast, and quotes Callimachus in support. A cap-shaped crown with a broad brim may be seen as headpiece to some of the fourth century terra-cotta statuettes. [51] Derived from Herodotus, ii. 35. [52] *i.e.* when one word might have saved me. [53] The Eumenides. [54] See 44. [55] Verg. *Ecl.* viii. 101. [56] *i.e.* Antigone. [57] The Council of Areopagus: for its powers in this particular, see Jebb on *O. C.* 947. [58] The doctrine is this: If a man sin wilfully, he is punished by gods with an infatuation which leads him on to sin again. Œdipus is conscious of no wilful wrong in himself (see p. 83), therefore he ascribes his involuntary misdeeds to a family curse, working as described in *Antigone* (chorus on p. 161). [59] The shore near Eleusis, *bright* because of the torchlight processions at the Eleusinian Festival. [60] Metaphorical for the pledge not to reveal the Mysteries. Jebb has an admirably full commentary on the whole passage, concerning the Eumolpid priesthood, &c. [61] Artemis. [62] This cant antithesis of the day (see Thucydides, *passim*) gives point to A. Croiset's suggestion that Sophocles designed to portray in Theseus the liberal virtues of Periclean Athens. [63] For this pessimism, see Introd. Essay, pp. lvi and lx. It is part of the Ionian colour with which Sophocles is everywhere touched, and in this play

especially more than tinged. Bacchylides has the same sentiment (v. 160, Kenyon), *θνατοῖσι μὴ φῦναι φέριστον*; the Schol. quotes Theognis, 425, to the same effect, and Jebb furnishes other like passages. [64] *i.e.* in the beggar's usual wallet. The Schol. notes the rhetorical skill in the arrangement of Polyneices' speech. [65] *i.e.* the curse on your house. [66] Peloponnese—so called from a mythical King Apis. [67] For this list as well as for the story, see Aeschylus' *Septem* and Euripides' *Phoenissae*, and Statius' *Thebais*: compare also *Antigone*, pp. 142-44. [68] See 39. [69] *i.e.* symbolic posture as suppliant, to which Polyneices has appealed in "*I, God's votarist.*" [70] *They*—the curses. The Cyclic Thebaid gave as the reason for Œdipus' curses a legend of Hesiodic rudeness: Eteocles and Polyneices used to send to Œdipus in his blindness a shoulder of sacrificial meat; one day they fob him off with an inferior joint, and in anger he curses them. This tale was employed by the writers of New Comedy, with whom the cookery *motif* was a favourite. The Scholiast (on *O. C.* 1375) quotes a line of Menander and a considerable anonymous fragment from a writer of the early fourth century. [71] I think the meaning of this grim epithet lies in the '*fatherless to me*,' eight lines above: he implies, 'Erebus, that is all the father you have left.' [72] These verses serve to connect the present play with *Antigone*, its sequel in dramatic order, but composed some thirty or forty years earlier. [73] *i.e.* this is a second painful scene in which Œdipus figures: first, the episode of Creon, now this with Polyneices. The supernatural character of Œdipus is now more clearly perceived by the Chorus, who are completely reconverted, and



prepared to justify all the ways of God to men. [74] The Thebans, as brood of the Dragon's teeth which Cadmus planted. [75] It is hard to avoid reading into these lines and Œdipus' former address to Theseus on p. 85, Sophocles' judgment on the latter days of his lifetime, the rapid downfall of Athens in punishment for her ὕβρις. [76] Text doubtful. [77] See 42. THRESHOLD CATARACT, *i.e.* the *downward plunging* or *precipitous* threshold. [78] A natural hollow in the ground (like our English *Devil's Punchbowls*), named by legend the place where Theseus and Peirithous made a pact together before descending into Hades, whence they were rescued by Hercules (see Euripides' *Hercules*). The *tallies* were probably marks on the rock (Jebb). [79] The Scholiast's refusal to explain is the most reasonable commentary on these local particulars: "*these things are familiar to the people of the place*," he says. [80] Demeter Euchloos' shrine stood on a neighbouring small hill (v. map in Jebb's Introduction). [81] The Greek leaves it doubtful whether their crying or the thunder is meant. [82] *i.e.* 'since Fate takes this course'—a metaphor perhaps from the trend of a road. [83] *i.e.* unhonoured with funeral rites. [84] The parts played by the sisters respectively in *Antigone* are excellently foreshadowed in this short duet: Ismene submissive and cautious, Antigone all enthusiasm and passionate affection. [85] This vague phrase seems to convey both *kindness from the Gods Underground*, and also *the blessing which it was foretold should accrue upon Œdipus' burying-place.*

[86] Evidently when he wrote this, Sophocles had as yet no thought of the Colonean part of the story. [87] *i.e.* her dead brothers, or perhaps (by an euphemistic plural) Polyneices alone. [88] *There*, *i.e.* by the usual Greek idiom, *in death*. [89] The religious obligation of burial. [90] The mystical turn of phrase suits with Antigone's state of spiritual exaltation. [91] Admirably in character: a vulgar dramatist would have made her bind Ismene to secrecy. [92] *i.e.* enthusiasm in an unpromising cause. [93] The etymological meaning of the name Polyneices. So in Queen Elizabeth's poem—

> "The Daughter of Debate,
> That eke discord doth sow"—

of Mary Queen of Scots. [94] See 74. [95] This stanza and the next *Turn* specially refer to Capaneus, taken as type of the assaulting army. See Polyneices' catalogue of the Seven (p. 116 of this volume) and Jebb's note on *O. C.* 1319. [96] Literally, "Ares, that off trace-horse." The Greek felt nothing undignified in this common metaphor for a helper at need (see Aesch. *Agamemnon*, 842). [97] Zeus Tropaios. [98] Eteocles and Polyneices. [99] *i.e.* Thebes, cf. p. 174. Critias (fr. 1) attributes the invention of the chariot to Thebes. [100] The subtlety of Greek can equivocate between '*own*' and '*kindred*' in such words as αὐτόχειρ and φίλος, cf. p. 191:—

> "*Mes.* Haemon, by hands *familiar* overthrown.
> *Chor.* By the hand of his father, or his own?"

[101] The proverb, "*Office shews the man*," was attributed to Bias and others of the Seven Sages. [102] *i.e.*



just enough to constitute a formal burying and so escape the defilement of passing by an unburied corpse (v. the authorities collected by Jebb on *Ant.* 255). [103] *i.e.* a disaffected party in Thebes. [104] This rhetorical patch of Euripidean sophism (like the passage between Creon and the Messenger presently, and like the dialogue between Creon and Haemon, pp. 164, 165) is characteristic of Sophocles' earlier manner, exemplified also in *Ajax*. The later plays are singularly pure from such matter; in particular, it is the admirable relevancy of every line which makes *Œdipus Rex* his masterpiece. [105] Perhaps an echo of Prodicus the Sophist, who first articulated the differences between 'synonyms,' and drew out antitheses of 'opinion' and 'afterthought,' 'guessing' and 'certainty,' &c. [106] The course of thought in this chorus is, first, the marvellous ingenuity and power of man; next, the degeneration of these talents into knavery. [107] Her doctrine is that human law is circumscribed by divine law; when it transgresses this major obligation it loses validity. [108] *Theirs* — the dead. [109] The *dust* which Antigone sprinkled on her brother by way of burial is *bloody* because it causes her death. [110] *Surmise.* Ἐλπὶς includes in Greek all our several notions of *hope*, *belief*, *anticipation*, *surmise*. [111] *Quem perdere vult Deus, prius dementat* is taken from an anonymous Greek tragic fragment quoted here by the Schol. :—

> ὅταν δ' ὁ δαίμων ἀνδρὶ πορσύνῃ κακὰ
> τὸν νοῦν ἔβλαψε πρῶτον ᾧ βουλεύεται

(v. Jebb's Appendix). [112] A cant phrase like our 'gospel-truth.' [113] That, *technically*, she may not be starved to death. Jebb cites the usage of allotting a



dole to a vestal virgin at Rome when she was buried alive (Plutarch, *Num.* 10). [114] Niobe, daughter of Tantalus, queen to Amphion of Thebes. For a discussion of the Niobe in the rock on Mt. Sipylus, see Jebb's note on 831. [115] See 99. [116] *Venture*, by a common ironical euphemism for *sin*. The doctrine of heredity in guilt is, I think, invariably reserved for lyrics, and not introduced among dramatic *motifs* of the first order, except in a perfunctory hint like *O. C.* 965. Professor Butcher has shewn how much its influence, even upon Aeschylus, has been exaggerated. [117] That is, the service rendered to Polyneices is a kind of service rendered to God. [118] Eteocles. [119] The bracketed verses are perhaps not from the hand of Sophocles, unless we have here one of those "unaccountable lapses" with which the author of *The Sublime* taxes him. The verbal evidence (which decisively condemns a similar rhetorical amplification in *Ajax*) is slightly against their authenticity. But the thought is derived from Sophocles' favourite Herodotus; and the lines stood in the text as early as Aristotle's day, who cites them in illustration of a canon of rhetoric. From Sophocles' finished work we might strike them out unhesitatingly, but there are other passages in *Antigone* which shew that the sophistic influence was peculiarly strong upon him when he wrote this play. Certainly the passage is better without them: they fall coldly across the midst of her passionate parting speech. [120] General theme—the cruelty of Fate upon the guiltless and the guilty. Two examples point to Antigone, a third (Lycurgus) prepares for Creon's punishment. [121] Lycurgus, King of Thrace, who played the same part as



Pentheus at Thebes in resisting the cult of Dionysus. From its kinship with Dionysian origins, there was no more favourite subject of tragedy. According to one version, he was imprisoned in bonds of vine; if Sophocles followed this account, "*bonds of stone*" will mean "*bonds stiff as stone*": so the Scholiast. [122] "Phineus married Cleopatra, daughter of Boreas and Oreithuia, and by her had two sons, whose names are variously given. After her death he married Idaea, daughter of Dardanus, or, according to another account, Eidothea, sister of Cadmus. She treacherously blinded Cleopatra's sons, and imprisoned them in a tomb" (Apollodorus). [123] *Unwed* for *unhappily wed*, probably; but the expression is obscure and equivocal, and the many variants of the legend make it even more doubtful. [124] Oreithuia, her mother, was daughter to Erechtheus, King of Attica. [125] An alloy of gold with silver. [126] The Gods of Heaven do not concern themselves with burial, which is the Undergods' (Pluto, Hecate, &c.) province; but now they are provoked by Creon's outrage, and the Erinues will pursue him by their commission as well as the commission of the Gods of Hades. [127] For not only Polyneices, but the foreign invaders with whom he was leagued, had been left unburied. Sophocles alludes to the favourite Athenian legend of the *Supplices*, at whose request Theseus forced the Thebans to accord burial to the dead Argives (see Jebb's Note and Appendix). [128] Literally, "those of you who are there and those who are not." I have tried to imitate this forcible absurdity. [129] See 36. Creon has yielded! The Chorus return to the point of mind where they were at the end of the first chorus

(p. 145), and call upon Bacchus to come and lead the rejoicings in victorious Thebes. [130] Demeter, because Iacchus shared with her in the Mysteries.. [131] For the Corycian cave on Mount Parnassus, see Aesch. *Eum.* 22. [132] Almost in every country where Dionysus was worshipped there was a Nysa to justify his name. Here it is in Euboea. [133] Semelê. [134] The Euripus. [135] The elements share in the Dionysiac exultation (Eur. *Ion.* 1078). [136] Hecate. [137] "The kind of tomb which the poet here imagines is perhaps best represented in Greece by the rock tombs of Nauplia and of Spata in Attica. These consist of chambers worked horizontally into the rock, and approached by a passage or δρόμος, answering to that which Creon's men have to traverse before they reach the στόμιον of the tomb" (Jebb). [138] *i.e.* foolish in his would-be wisdom. [139] As it were a *current* account and a *deposit* account of misfortunes. Such is the man's homely trade metaphor. [140] Megareus or Menoeceus was Haemon's only brother, who devoted himself, as one descended from the Dragon stock, to appease the anger of Ares against Thebes (see Eur. *Phoen.* 930 foll., and Statius' *Thebais*, x. 589). [141] Creon plays to Œdipus (p. 61) the part that the Chorus here plays to him.



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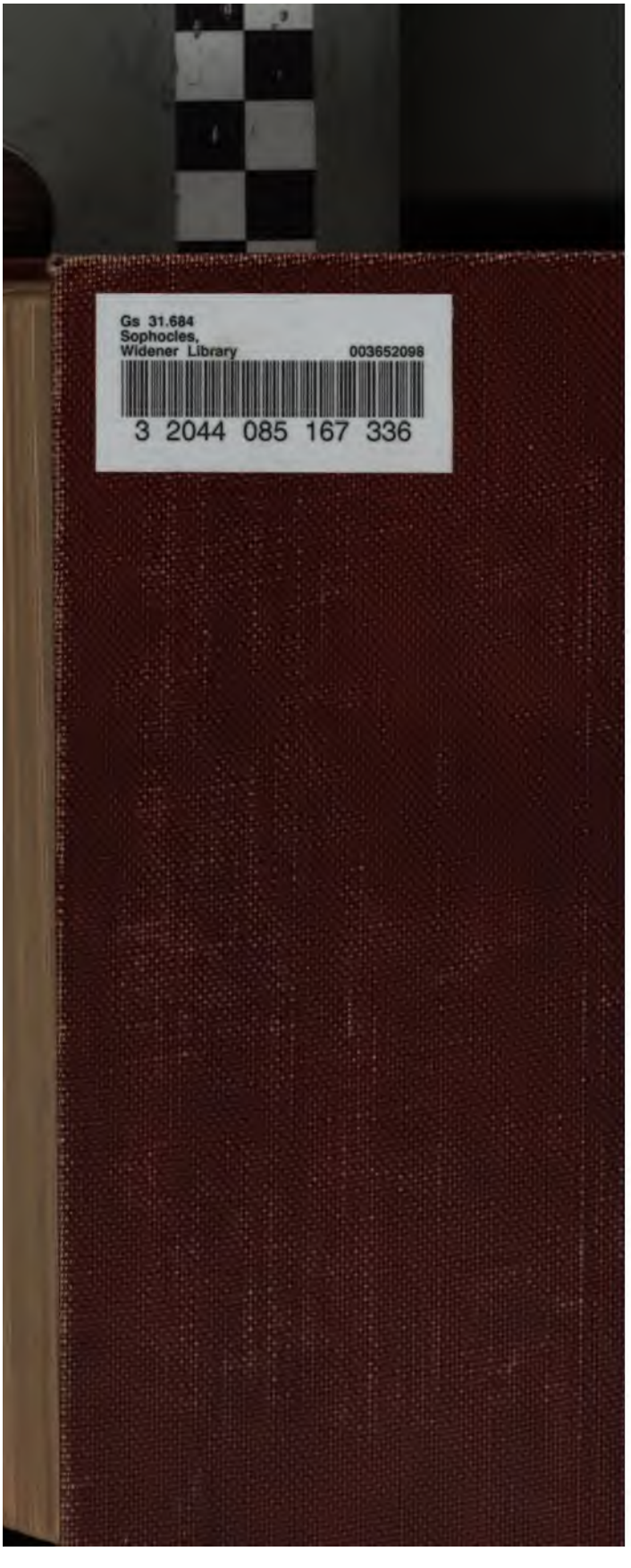
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